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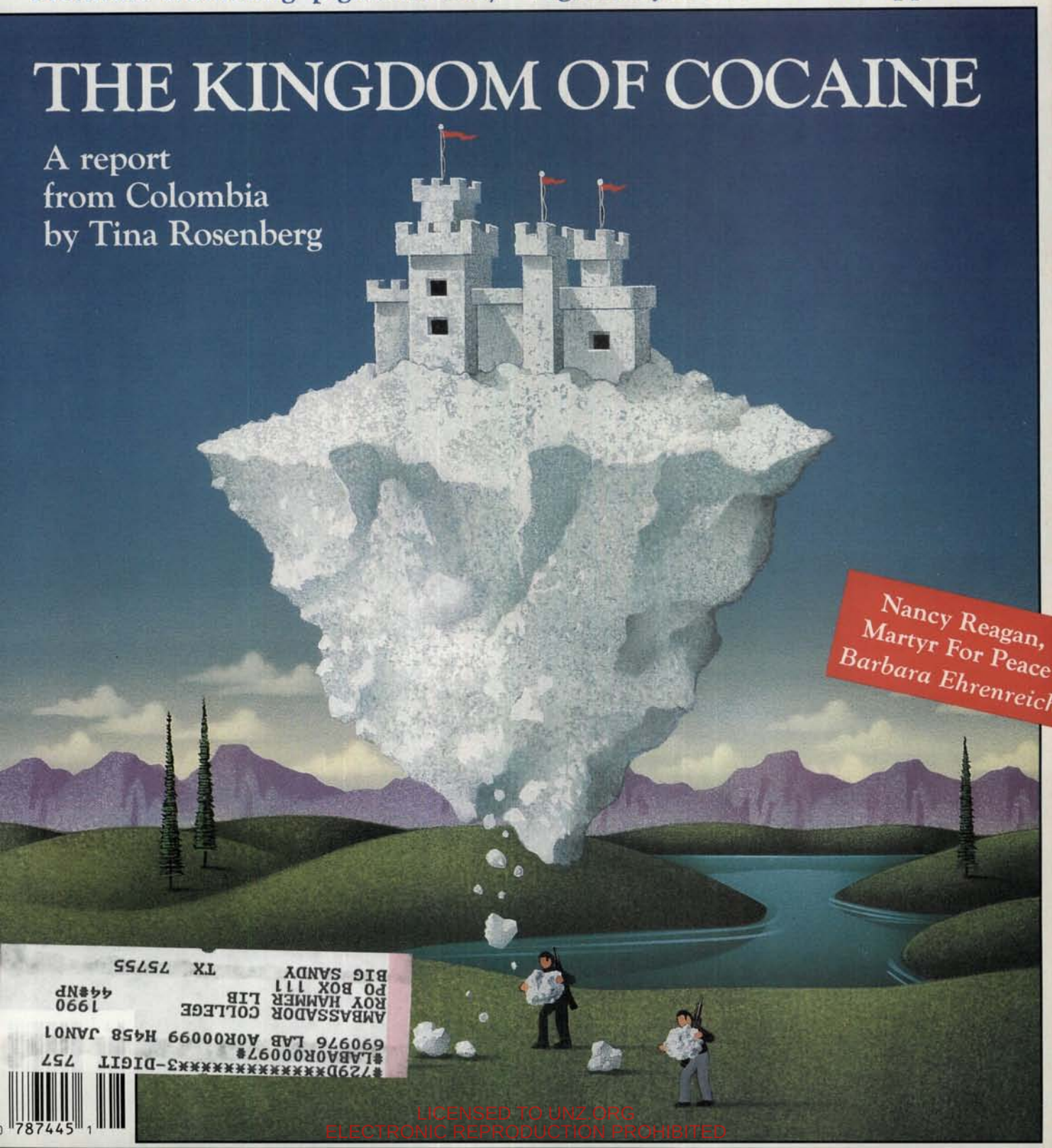

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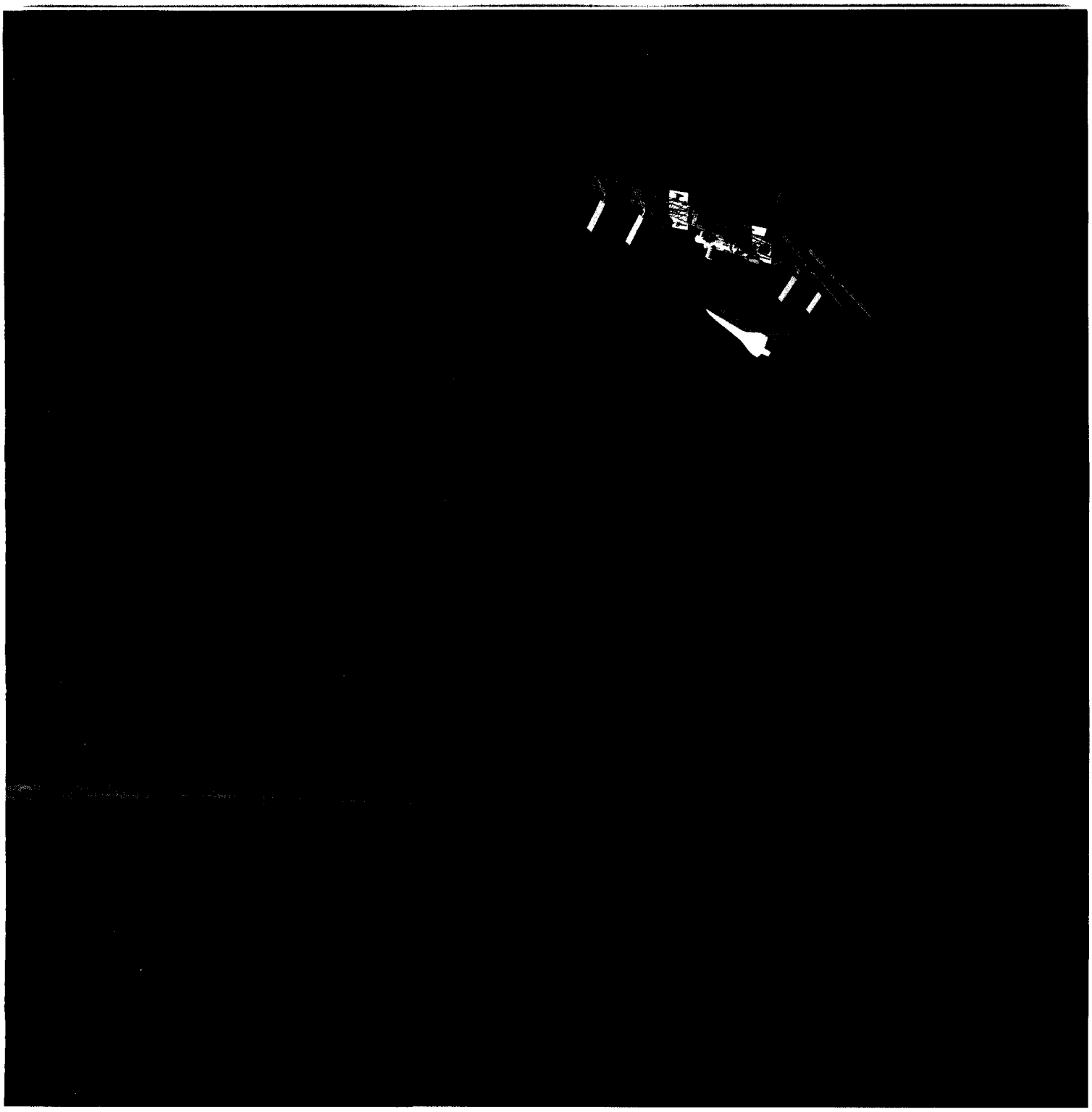

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FROM WASHINGTON

To be or not to be

It's always surprising to discover what questions the Supreme Court has never decided in its 200 years of sorting out our rights. Apparently the Justices have never ruled on whether there is a constitutional right to die. This is one of the questions raised by a case the Court will hear next month involving a woman who has spent six years lying in what is called "a persistent vegetative state"—almost, but not quite, brain-dead—after an automobile accident. The state of Missouri won't let her parents pull the plug. Or, to be exact, it won't let them order a halt to nutrients being supplied through a tube in her stomach. The other main question is who gets to exercise her right to die, if it exists, since she can't.

But the first question is more interesting. All sides deny that the case is really about a "right to die." Rather, they say, it is at most about the right to refuse medical treatment, thus raising issues like whether feeding through a stomach tube is medical treatment and the difference between active and passive measures to end life. Nevertheless, most people will feel the key point is that anyone sensible would wish to be spared Nancy Beth Cruzan's degradation. Suggestions by the state of Missouri that she may actually be slightly aware of her environment make me, at least, feel even more strongly that this I could do without.

The editors this week make a persuasive case for honoring the right to die (see "Feeling No Pain," page 7). But just because it's sensible doesn't mean that it's in the Constitution. Robert Bork would say that the question of a constitutional "right to die" has never arisen before because it's taken over a century of wild jurisprudence in order to reach such a ridiculous idea. This makes it good chewing for someone who wants to be a principled liberal on constitutional matters. That is, someone who sees *Roe* v. *Wade*, the abortion case, as overreaching but doesn't share Bork's contempt for almost every other constitutional right enunciated in the past few decades.

The Justice Department has written an odd brief in the *Cruzan* case. Odd, because it takes Missouri's side even though it concedes in a footnote that the federal government itself does exactly what the Cruzans want. Veterans and Army hospitals follow a policy of letting physicians and family decide together when to terminate treatment for a patient who cannot recover. But the Bush Administration is pandering to anti-abortion right-to-lifers, who have followed their own logic to this dead end. Probably by accident, this bit of hypocrisy puts the Administration in the highly principled position, constitutionally, of defending the right of states to follow a policy it disagrees with. Should the principled liberal follow suit?

The right to die certainly sounds more constitutional than the right to abortion. It has the constitutional virtue of simplicity. *Roe* involved peering into the broad phrases of the Constitution and discovering a complex regulatory scheme involving trimesters and whatnot. There's none of that here. (Although, like Justice Blackmun's right to abortion, the right to die urged in the *Cruzan* case is defined evasively as a matter of choosing the proper medical treatment.) Furthermore, there is symmetry on our side here. The state clearly cannot deny a person (except heinous criminals) the choice to live. Can it really deny that person the right to make the same choice the other way?

At this point Bork whips out his dog-eared copy of the Constitution, shoves it in your face, and demands, "Show me where it says . . . ." In his new book, *The Tempting of America* (Free Press), he repeats (and repeats) his famous opinion that the Constitution should be read stintingly. But, as Mickey Kaus demonstrated in his review in these pages three weeks ago, even Bork doesn't have the courage of his convictions. Advocates of a right to die, for example, say it can be extrapolated from the 14th Amendment's due process clause (". . . nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law . . ."). Bork's line is that this phrase is "entirely a procedural guarantee" and creates no substantive rights "aside from incorporating the Bill of Rights," which otherwise wouldn't apply to the states. Whoa! Where does it say these few words incorporate the Bill of Rights? Oh, "There is no occasion here" to get into all that.

Strict constructionists chortle at the

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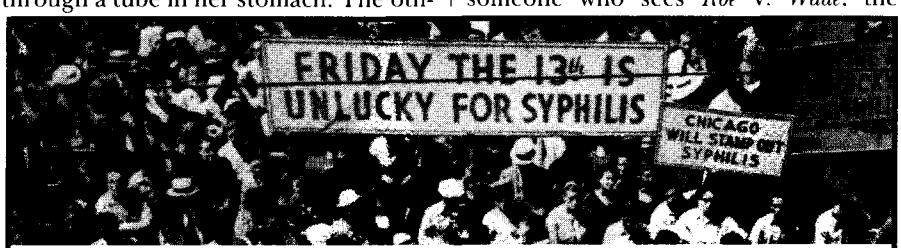

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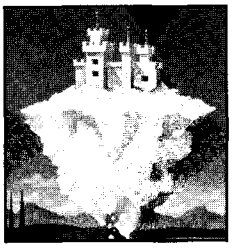
THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

NOVEMBER 27, 1989

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 3,906

RECEIVED
NOV 16 1989



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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 201, Number 22, Issue 3,906, November 27, 1989. (Printed in the U.S. on November 8, 1989.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 9 & 16, July 17 & 24, Aug. 7 & 14, and Sept. 18 & 25, 1989) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $59.97; foreign, $89.97; Canada, $74.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1989 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322. For subscription problems call 800-274-6686.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Hollywood strikes back

To the editors:
Fresh from delivering profundities on "The McLaughlin Group," Fred Barnes spends all of 72 hours in Los Angeles and advises Democrats to be "wary" of Hollywood ("Flix Mix in Politix," October 30). Of course, a Reagan-Bush supporter like Barnes would just love it if country and western singers on the campaign trail, stage-managed crack busts, Deaver photo-ops, Peggy Noonan eloquence, and actors running for President were the sole province of Republicans. From his point of view it would be great if Democrats got advice exclusively from lawyers and academics—as Michael Dukakis did.

With Atwateresque innuendo, Barnes warns Democrats that "on foreign policy and social issues like pornography, Hollywood liberals are too leftist for most Americans." The only foreign policy issues that have been popular in Hollywood have been sanctions against South Africa and opposition to aid to the *contras*, views that coincide with large majorities of Americans in virtually every poll taken on these two issues. I know of no Hollywood activity on behalf of pornography, but if Barnes is referring to opposition to censorship, this view is also shared by mainstream America.

Barnes was evidently so focused on his agenda that he did not bother to check his facts: Morgan Fairchild was not on "Falcon's Crest," Marge Tabankin was not involved with either the Hollywood Women's Political Committee (HWPC) or Barbra Streisand at the time of the famous concert. Mike Farrell was anti-*contra*, not pro-Sandinista (there is a difference). And Don Henley did not introduce Donna Rice to Gary Hart, as he had made clear in numerous public statements.

Barnes's fanciful tone was adopted by cover artist Allen Carroll. My wife, Rosemary, enjoyed his creation of muscular forearms and broad shoulders, in contrast to the reality of my rarely exercised paunch, but, for the record, I do not own a pair of dark glasses (they hurt my eyes) or a designer jacket, and I do not drink.

DANNY GOLDBERG
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:
Republicans have a shot at majorities in the House and Senate if the Democrats continue to cozy up to the Hollywood activists. These people are self-absorbed and out of touch with reality. They think that because the public enjoys television, movies, and music that they are in touch with the "people." The public uses Hollywood as an escape, not a reflection of reality. The Hollywood activists are just the type of "special interest group" that moves the Democratic Party away from mainstream appeal.

BRUCE CHRISTENSEN
South Pasadena, California

To the editors:
Generalizing about members of a large community is a frequent substitute for analysis, and Fred Barnes brooks no gradations of individual belief in jamming everyone in the entertainment industry (except Arnold Schwarzenegger) into the far left of the political spectrum.

Even more nonsensical is his central thesis, which seems to be that it's fine for Hollywood celebrities to write checks, but God forbid that they try to engage in issues analysis or political dialogue. This is elitist Beltway baloney, anti-intellectual in the extreme: the industry should be content being mannequins to "attract a crowd" rather than trying to be informed and engaged citizens. It also fails to note that Hollywood money may be the last clean contribution left: Barnes describes people interested in the major issues of broad national policy, not in special interest legislation.

Barnes accuses the industry of self-importance, apparently because of a sentiment he heard while out here that Democrats at a Presidential level were losing in part due to an incoherent message, inadequately delivered. This critique is hardly unique to Hollywood, and it seems bizarre to characterize as effrontery the notion that the mass communications business might have something of value to say about communications strategy. The notion of "self-importance" also flies in the face of the extraordinary, direct community work engaged in by so many members of the industry.

Barnes concludes by opining that Hollywood's culture may not be America's. If the veracity of political beliefs is to be determined by their popular appeal, would Barnes wish to compare the size of his audience with Don Henley's, or Barbra Streisand's?

C. RICHARD ALLEN
Beverly Hills, California

To the editors:
What's the biggest thing Fred Barnes doesn't like about the Democrats and Hollywood? The Democrats.

MITCH HOROWITZ
New York, New York

Fred Barnes replies:
I was right. Hollywood politicos do take themselves too seriously. For the record, CBS assures me Morgan Fairchild was on "Falcon Crest"; I never said Marge Tabankin came to HWPC before the famous 1986 fund-raising concert at Barbra Streisand's; and Gary Hart met Donna Rice, who was Don Henley's friend, at Henley's house. I did make make one error. What Arnold Schwarzenegger actually said at a Bush rally was: "I only played the Terminator. When it comes to America's future, Michael Dukakis is the real Terminator." (By the way, I agree that Streisand and Henley have bigger audiences than I do.)

Educational barrios

To the editors:
To solve the education mess we need to restructure not only American education, as Morton Kondracke discusses ("Sorry Summit," October 23), but many aspects of American society. Teachers can't force students to do homework, nor can they compel parents to earn decent incomes or provide fit homes. Some parents are unable to help their children because they are illiterate or don't know English.

Despite such adversities and more, a surprising number of competent, dedicated teachers work in schools that, like the barrio school at which I teach, score at the bottom of the heap in standardized tests. I therefore feel more threatened than encouraged by the prospect of school or district accountability reports. I'd be willing to be judged by my students' progress relative to those in similarly overcrowded, understaffed, mismanaged school districts in high-crime areas, but not against students' progress in more reasonable neighborhoods. If I came to feel I was being tarred for my efforts (instead of just being ignored, as is the case), I could well be driven from where I am needed most.

PAUL ROTHENSTEIN
Bellflower, California

Courting tradition

To the editors:
Once again THE NEW REPUBLIC says *Roe* v. *Wade* was wrongly decided because it intrudes on the authority of state legislatures (Notebook, October 16). Actually, *Roe* is in the best tradition of the Supreme Court's role in American government. The decision is a reasonable compromise among competing interests: the state's interest in protecting life (of

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 27, 1989

FEELING NO PAIN

Nancy Cruzan lies unconscious in a Missouri hospital. She can breathe, digest, and produce urine without assistance, but all physiological evidence indicates that she has no thoughts, sensations, or emotions. The philosopher Thomas Nagel once wrote an essay on consciousness called "What Is It Like To Be a Bat?"—the implication being that it is like *something* to be even a blind winged rodent. It seems safe to say that it isn't like anything to be Nancy Cruzan.

And it never will be. Of roughly 100,000 patients who have been in a "persistent vegetative state" over the past 20 years, only three have recovered, and none after more than 22 months. Cruzan has been unconscious for nearly seven years. If not for the nutrition piped into her body, she would have died, mercifully, long ago. Nonetheless, the Missouri Supreme Court has prohibited her parents from disconnecting the feeding tube.

In early December the U.S. Supreme Court will consider Cruzan's fate as it hears its first right-to-die case. It would hardly require an unprecedented exertion of judicial activism for the Court to assert the right of comatose patients to die; resorting to an implicit constitutional right to privacy—and doing so with fewer intellectual gymnastics than are found in *Roe* v. *Wade*—would suffice. In the case of Cruzan, there would then remain the further question of whether her parents are entitled to speak for her in this matter. (She had left no "living will" specifying her wishes, as a growing number of people do.) But whether or not the Court allows Cruzan's parents to lay her finally to rest, state legislatures around the nation should take the occasion to reconsider the issue of euthanasia. It is time to define unequivocally a right to die, not only in the fairly clear-cut case of a comatose patient with no hope of regaining consciousness, but in the more complex cases of sentient, terminally ill patients.

The Missouri Supreme Court's ruling rested on the assertion that the state has a strong "interest in promoting life." But of course, Cruzan does not bear the hallmarks of human life. And to whom, anyway, does her "life" have value? Not to her, certainly. To Missouri's taxpayers, who are paying about $130,000 a year for her medical upkeep? (Her insurance policy, originally worth more than $1 million, has been exhausted.) To her family? It is they alone who could draw benefits, however meager, from her continued "existence." More likely is that they find her vacant body a continuing source of anguish. No doubt that is one reason they have been working for the last two years to let her die.

Most people would agree that, whether the sanction comes from the legislature or the courts, Cruzan's parents should be permitted to disconnect her feeding tube. Yet some of these same people will object when we say that a doctor should inject a fatal dose of morphine in a terminal cancer patient who asks to die. While "passive" euthanasia is now widely accepted in medical, legal, and religious circles, "active" euthanasia remains controversial. The American Medical Association frowns on it, laws prohibit it, religious groups condemn it.

Yet the logic behind the two kinds of euthanasia is in some ways parallel. In both cases, a radically diminished version of "life" is ended, primarily because the person "living" it cannot enjoy—or expect ever again to enjoy—the things that make most lives worth living. In both instances, we seek a "good death" (the meaning of euthanasia) when a good life is simply not available.

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Indeed, the argument for death in some ways seems stronger in the case of a cancer patient: he is in eternal discomfort, not merely eternal slumber. In utilitarian terms, his consciousness is represented by a negative number, not a zero. So why do many people find Cruzan's case more compelling than a cancer patient's?

One reason is the seemingly clear distinction between passive and active euthanasia—between withdrawing artificial life-support mechanisms, thus letting nature take its course, and introducing a lethal substance, thus ending life prematurely. This distinction may fuzz up a bit if you ponder it long enough: Is a feeding tube more "artificial" than a nurse bringing in a tray of food? In any event, this distinction is not what ultimately gives thoughtful people pause about active euthanasia. The more valid stumbling block is the practical effect of the two forms of euthanasia—the fact that active euthanasia, unlike passive euthanasia, brings with it many dicey procedural questions and, ultimately, a slippery slope.

First, the procedural questions: If active euthanasia is to be allowed when death is imminent, how do you decide that death is imminent? How imminent does it have to be? And how do you gauge the sincerity, the durability, of the patient's expressed willingness to die? After all, people who are persuaded not to commit suicide often live to be glad they did not, and it is conceivable that even a cancer patient could in the end be grateful for a few final weeks to reflect on life.

Last year an anonymous doctor wrote in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* of how he had injected "Debbie," a 20-year-old ovarian cancer patient, with a lethal dose of morphine. He had received no unambiguous request from the patient to cause her death (she purportedly had murmured, once, "Let's get this over with") and had consulted no other physician. This is a textbook case of how not to conduct active euthanasia.

The conditions laid down in legislation proposed by the Hemlock Society, a right-to-die group, would prevent repeats of the "Debbie" episode while allowing physicians humanely to end their patients' lives: the patient must suffer from a terminal disease and in all likelihood have no more than six months to live, and at least two physicians must confirm this prognosis independently. Patients must certify in writing their wish to die, with two disinterested witnesses—unrelated to the patient—present. These are sensible safeguards, though some states may want to strengthen them—*two* separate written declarations of a will to die, spaced over at least ten days, for example.

Now for the slippery slope question. Once we sanction euthanasia, what is to stop it from entering the domain of cold cost-benefit calculations? Suppose the family paying for the treatment of a senile, barely sentient cancer patient chooses to stop subsidizing everyone's misery, even if the patient hasn't asked to be put out of his. Suppose society (or a specific pool of insurance policyholders) chooses to quit paying for the care of elderly, terminally ill patients, thus encouraging active euthanasia. Suppose the government, as medicine becomes more socialized, makes similar judgments.

The first answer to this concern is that such developments lie, if downhill along a somewhat slippery slope, nonetheless beyond a distinct fence. Before society embraces euthanasia as a way to significantly save money, the opportunity for a fresh round of debate will present itself. The second answer is that this debate will be a healthy one. As advances in medical technology succeed in keeping more and more people attached to life with a more and more attenuated thread, it is right to ask whether society should expend an ever larger fraction of finite medical resources so futilely. What is already clear is the absurdity of doing so when the patients themselves are begging to have the thread snipped.

NOTEBOOK

ROAST BEEF: It's a fundamental rule of the trade that journalists should not solicit money from the people they write about. Another rule is that they shouldn't try to influence the events they cover. Both were flouted at a recent charity "roast" of columnist Robert Novak to benefit spina bifida. The festivities were supposed to be cable-televised, but C-SPAN couldn't start its coverage until the House finished its business for the day. So Al Hunt, Washington bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, called Representative Robert Dornan to get him to cut short an evening speech. Though Dornan later said he was somewhat taken aback by the request, he was happy to yield the floor. Hunt also sold $120,000 worth of tickets for the dinner to executives at companies including Ford, Searle, and Gannett. He defends himself by saying he was just calling up some friends to raise money for a good cause, but the conflict of interest is clear: What corporation wants to say no to a request for money from someone at the *Journal*? And if Hunt accepts the favor, it puts him in a tricky situation the next time one of his reporters wants to write a critical story about one of his benefactors. It's fitting that the dinner honored Novak, who has long been the pacesetter in journalistic conflicts of interest (he pays honoraria to legislators he writes about when they attend his for-profit political seminars). But no one at the roast was in a position to rake him over the coals.

THE SEQUESTRATI SING: Charlie Peters, editor of the *Washington Monthly*, originated the Firemen First Principle, which describes the way bureaucrats fend off budget cuts by threatening to curtail the most basic services they provide. True to form, government agencies have begun to delineate exuberantly the draconian effects of the $16.1 billion Gramm-Rudman "sequestration," the automatic budget cuts that went

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into effect last month. According to the *Post*, the Census Bureau won't be able to conduct an accurate census and the Defense Department will have to lay off 170,000 active duty troops. Health and Human Services plans to cut AIDS research and child immunization; the Department of Agriculture threatens to furlough food inspectors. What about tobacco subsidies and cut-rate goods in Army PXs? The basic approach here is: cut my allowance and I'll hold my breath till I'm dead.

HOLD THE BACON: Under pressure from organized labor, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee last week rejected the nomination of Debra Bowland to run the Department of Labor's wage and hour division. Though committee Democrats conceded that she was highly able, they disqualified her because she is insufficiently devoted to the Davis-Bacon Act, the law that says the government must pay "prevailing wage" rates for federal building projects. In practice, prevailing wage translates into the highest known wage. Davis-Bacon and state laws along the same lines make it prohibitively expensive for government to fix highways, erect housing for the homeless, or do anything else with cement and shovels. Doubts about the merit of Davis-Bacon are the best résumé a nominee could bring to the wage and hour division. Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio suggested to Bowland that she might be an appropriate choice for the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau. And keep out of the construction business, sweetie.

SHAKY REASONING:

Experts surprised at earthquake's location, severity

—*Washington Times*, October 18

1988 report pegged the danger to area

—same paper, same day, same page

L.A. quake could severely cripple UCLA campus

—*Daily Bruin* (UCLA), October 19

UCLA experts believe the university is well prepared for big quake

—same paper, same day, same page
(thanks to Mark Attorri, Falls Church, Virginia, and Mitchell Keiter, Los Angeles, California)

INSECURITIES:

Small Investors Are Losing Heart Again, Stock-Fund Data Show

—*Wall Street Journal*, October 31

Individuals Stay Unafraid of Stocks

—*New York Times*, same day.
(thanks to Eliot A. Cohen, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

FEARLESS LEADER

By Fred Barnes

In the Cabinet Room on October 24, President Bush and Republicans from Capitol Hill talked war. The road, so smooth for Bush's first nine months in the White House, had gotten bumpy. He blinked when a coup threatened to topple Manuel Noriega in Panama, suffered embarrassing losses to Democrats in Congress on child care and abortion, then backed off temporarily from his full-court press for a tax cut on capital gains. Newt Gingrich, the House GOP Whip, goaded the President by saying his Democratic foes are "unbelievably partisan." Pete Domenici, a senior Republican Senator, argued that Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell was scoring with zingers aimed at Bush. "You've got to fight back," Domenici said.

Sorry, Senator, but Bush does not wish to lead an offensive. "I'm willing to be tough," he said. But he's not willing to sound tough. When Domenici urged Bush to attack Congressional Democrats, John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, interjected: "Why don't you guys attack?" Domenici's response was that no one pays attention when they do. He's right, but Bush was unpersuaded. He and his advisers have latched onto a style that allows Bush to take aggressively conservative positions—on abortion and spending cuts, for instance. It doesn't allow him to appear to be combative, shrill, or sharply partisan. That's for others, and not just Republican bomb throwers like Gingrich. If Sununu, Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater, and White House aides want to get belligerent, fine. But not Bush.

At his anniversary press conference on November 7 (one year after his election), Bush performed according to plan. He talked up bipartisanship and voiced only faint criticism of Democrats. "I'm going to continue to extend my hand to Congress," he said in scripted remarks. In answering a question, Bush insisted the White House is doggedly "trying to cooperate in a bipartisan fashion." The problem is that Congress won't "move quickly" to enact Bush's proposals. The President also called Congress "insensitive." You can't get much milder than that. As for Mitchell, the Democrat who derailed Bush's capital gains cut, Bush was not about to question motives. "Maybe with George Mitchell," he said, "there's an honest difference on capital gains." This was not the kind of retort Domenici and other Republicans had in mind.

The Bush approach got positive reinforcement from a national survey conducted in mid-October by Bob Teeter, the President's personal pollster and political

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adviser. The poll made such a strong impression on Bush that he cited it twice during his press conference. Teeter found that even after the Panama fiasco, Bush is viewed positively by three-fourths of the American people. Asked specifically if Bush's performance was just right, too bold, or too cautious, three-fourths said just right. Asked who's to blame for the deficit and inaction on the budget, 65 percent pointed the finger at Congress, only 16 percent at Bush. As for whom people consider the leader of the Democratic Party, Jesse Jackson finished first, Mario Cuomo second. Mitchell and House Speaker Tom Foley barely registered. "They're invisible," says Teeter.

So why go eyeball-to-eyeball with them? "Right now there's no one in Congress who's viable as an opponent of the President," said a senior White House aide. By attacking them, "The President might just build them up." Besides, Democrats "haven't won very much, if anything. In terms of rhetoric, they've had a temporary offensive in the press and it seems to have fallen flat." The strategy "is to stick to our guns and be kind of moderately quiet—that's not a good term—or quietly tough. How can you be bothered when you're at 75 percent and winning all your programs?" The aide says that if Mitchell blocks a capital gains cut this year, it will pass in 1990. Then there are all the summits, from the session on December 2 and 3 in the Mediterranean with Mikhail Gorbachev to another economic summit next summer, an arms control summit, a NATO summit, etc. The point is that summits are usually popularity builders.

One example of the White House style occurred right after the October 24 meeting with GOP Congressional leaders. Bush kept his cool, but Fitzwater stormed back to the press room ready to attack. "We believe we have the votes to get passage of capital gains in the Senate, just as we had the votes in the House," he said. "And we find it very difficult to understand that the [Democratic] leadership would be willing to hold up the entire United States budget in this fashion just to make a political point on capital gains." Domenici also delivered a strong attack, "but nobody else jumped in," says Fitzwater. Mitchell fired back at both Fitzwater and Mitchell. The back-and-forth faded after a day. Fitzwater concluded that he, like Bush, gained nothing by attacking. "It doesn't look like that's the best strategy," he says.

A better example involves Bush's veto of a spending bill that included federal money for abortions in the case of rape or incest. The veto prompted Democrats to vow to attach the same provision to other bills. Pro-life Republicans told the White House they might be able to draft compromise language that would get Bush off the hook. Bush waited and waited before deciding on November 2 that no compromise was workable. Sununu called Representative Chris Smith, who was holding an anti-abortion strategy session in his office at the time. Sununu says he was actually returning a call from Smith, but never mind. What's important is that Sununu said Bush would veto any bill that included federal funding for abortion. Sununu was asked if this would apply to a continuing resolution, the veto of which might force the federal government to shut down. "Absolutely," said Sununu.

There's irony in this. Bush has changed positions on abortion and is uncomfortable in dealing with the issue. Yet there's no issue during his Presidency on which he's taken a more airtight conservative position. Of course, that's not the way he sounds. At his press conference, he downplayed abortion. "Is it the most important issue for me? Absolutely not," he said. And it isn't to most people either, he said. To prove this, he trotted out the Teeter poll. "That issue ranks about ninth to 14th," he said. Actually, in response to the question of what's the biggest national problem, it came in 11th, with four percent. (Fifty-seven percent said drugs, 18 percent said homelessness.) Bush also expressed tolerance of pro-choice Republicans. "I don't fault people who come down differently on this," he said. "There's plenty of room for difference."

A third example of Bush's style occurred on the sequester of $16 billion in federal funds for 1990 under Gramm-Rudman. In his statement, Bush was firm but apologetic. "I deeply regret the tone of partisanship that has entered the economic policy debate," he said. "I would very much have preferred a fair and balanced debate—and vote—on the merits. But the Congressional process has bogged down. Now the stalemate must be broken." At his press conference, he asked reporters to join him in pressing Congress to send budget legislation to him so the sequester can be lifted. "Join me in this noble crusade," he said.

In truth, a lot of White House aides will be unhappy if Congress approves spending cuts that are acceptable to Bush. They jumped at the chance to impose the sequester. Sununu, budget director Richard Darman, and Vice President Dan Quayle see it as an opportunity to make deep, permanent cuts with no gimmicks. Bush went along readily. "He likes Gramm-Rudman," an aide said. Even Teeter and Fitzwater, who aren't right-wing ideologues, are enthusiastic about the sequester. "We ought to take the sequester for the whole year," Fitzwater says. "It's real budget reduction. We can say to the Democrats, 'you keep whining about budget reduction, but we're doing it.' "

The sequester requires across-the-board cuts in all programs. Though the Pentagon takes the biggest hit, the loudest complaints didn't come from Defense Secretary Dick Cheney. They came from Transportation Secretary Sam Skinner and Jack Kemp, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Still, Bush didn't flinch. He's concluded, correctly, that with the sequester he'll have a far better shot at reaching the 1991 deficit target of $64 billion without raising taxes. Moreover, a Bush adviser said, "we think it's a good position to fight the Democrats on."

Of course, Bush would never say that. Nor was he the one who chastised Senate Republican leader Bob Dole for suggesting the White House has given up on getting a capital gains cut this year. (The White House did give up on tacking the cut on the budget or debt limit.) Sununu

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got the job of talking to Dole and to Walt Riker, Dole's press secretary. Riker had been quoted in a wire report as saying Bush had "thrown in the towel" on capital gains. "That's dead wrong," Sununu told Riker. He said Riker ought to correct anything he'd said to the contrary. "That was the end of the conversation," said Sununu. •

Bush's coming energy crisis.

RUNNING ON EMPTY

By Morton Kondracke

You thought that energy was a problem of the '70s swept away forever with the breaking of OPEC unity, the end of gas lines, the arrival of fuel-efficient cars, and the return of 95-cent-per-gallon gasoline. Sorry. We've been enjoying only a respite, and we haven't used it very well to prepare for the next time. Energy experts now widely agree that unless the country acts fast, in four to six years "the problem" will be back: the United States will be excessively dependent on Persian Gulf suppliers, OPEC once again will control a tight market, and prices will soar, causing stagflation in industrialized economies and bringing new misery to the Third World.

The warning signs are evident: in July 1988, for the first time, the United States got more than half of its oil from foreign sources. (In 1973, when the Arabs imposed an oil embargo and the OPEC cartel first quadrupled oil prices, the United States was 33 percent dependent.) Production from the continental United States has been declining since 1971, and the North Sea and most other non-Gulf sources also are declining as potential providers of new oil.

Meanwhile, at a time of renewed environmental activism and concern about global warming, there will be resistance—some legitimate, some reflexive—to exploitation of coal, nuclear power, and other alternative energy sources. A new U.S. Government report indicates that within ten years only four countries (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait) will have enough production capacity to satisfy rising world demand—that is, to set prices. Right now the price of oil is relatively low, $19.50 per barrel (the 1979 peak was $40), but except for filling up a 90-day strategic petroleum reserve, the United States has been doing little to protect itself against a new price rise or supply cutoff.

The Bush Administration, to its credit, is aware of the danger, and the Department of Energy is working on a national strategy that officials claim will make balanced use of all available energy sources in order to provide the country with the power it needs, at a price it can afford, while protecting the environment and U.S. national security interests. Administration officials say that the nation has had energy "policies" before (Jimmy Carter's was too government-managed, they say, and Ronald Reagan's was too laissez-faire) but has never had a real strategy based on an agreed data base and a political consensus. That, they say, is what the President has charged Energy Secretary James Watkins to come up with.

The problem, as Bush's critics see it, is that the strategy won't be delivered to the President until December 1990 or announced until January 1991 (in the State of the Union address), and therefore probably couldn't be enacted during Bush's first term. They also fear it will not be adequately coordinated, with separate (and possibly conflicting) transportation and environmental strategies being worked on elsewhere in the Administration, and will likely be chewed up in Congress's disorganized policy grinder. The result, according to Jessica Tuchman Mathews, a former Carter national security aide now with the World Resources Institute, will be "a continued lack of energy policy, another round of OPEC price rises in the early or mid-1990s—this time, if OPEC is smart, not so dramatic as to induce strong conservation measures—and a fiscal hemorrhage."

Interestingly, what has not happened so far is what many liberals—and energy companies—might have expected: that George Bush, the one-time Texas oilman and Houston Congressman, would keep his petro-pals happy with subsidies, tax breaks, and regulatory relaxation. One energy lobbyist said, "Our people think he's forgotten where he came from. The guy from the oil patch is now an environmentalist. So far, he's as bad as Dukakis would have been."

The energy companies' complaint is that Bush did not do enough to fight Congress's moratorium on new offshore drilling and its post-Valdez ban on exploration of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and that he proposed a clean air package that would have required Detroit to produce a million cars by 1997 running on methanol and ethanol, rather than good ol' gasoline. Except for some relatively small tax breaks, Bush has recommended little to aid the oil companies, certainly not the import fee he hinted at during the campaign to raise oil prices and encourage domestic production.

The worries of the energy industry may prove groundless. If, as Mathews expects, Bush's national energy strategy runs aground, foreigners will drive up the price and oil profits eventually will rise, especially if the companies can get Congress to permit offshore drilling and open up the ANWR. It's also possible, though, that everyone will suffer from a stalemate, as energy interests lobby Congress and the White House to prevent adequate measures to conserve energy and control global warming, while environmentalists block new drilling and exploitation of other energy sources, such as nuclear power.

According to Deputy Energy Secretary Henson

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Moore, this is just the sort of impasse that the Energy Department is trying to prevent. Through a painstaking process of hearings, massive data collection, and examination of alternatives, he says he wants to devise a plan that will invite usually hostile interests to agree to tradeoffs. The Administration, he asserts, does not regard conservation as namby-pamby, takes seriously the problem of global warming, and will coordinate energy, foreign, economic, environment, and transportation policies through a sub-Cabinet interagency council and, ultimately, the White House Economic Policy Council.

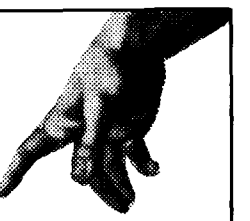
But there are signs of things going haywire. Mathews points out that the Administration is developing an environmental policy that is out of sync with its energy policy: a clean air bill already has been proposed, with emphasis on alternative fuels that may be energy- and cost-inefficient (ethanol derived from corn), contribute to global warming (methanol made from coal), or lead to greater reliance on Mideast suppliers (methanol made from natural gas).

Despite promises to consider every energy option, Mathews thinks that Administration and Congressional research priorities are likely to be the same as they are now, with continued primary emphasis on "clean coal" technology ("a greenhouse effect oxymoron," she says, because coal produces double the CO_2 of natural gas and 1.5 times the amount from gasoline), nuclear power, and natural gas—with little attention paid to conservation, fuel efficiency, and promising new technologies. Germany, for example, is spending $50 million per year on hydrogen as a fuel (derived from water!), and a prototype hydrogen-powered Mercedes already exists; the United States is spending just $5.2 million. In France, Renault has a prototype diesel car that makes use of new hard-plastic materials and aerodynamic engineering, has a superefficient engine and transmission, and gets 107 miles per gallon on the highway. Toyota has one that gets 110 mpg. "Detroit is behind the curve again," she says.

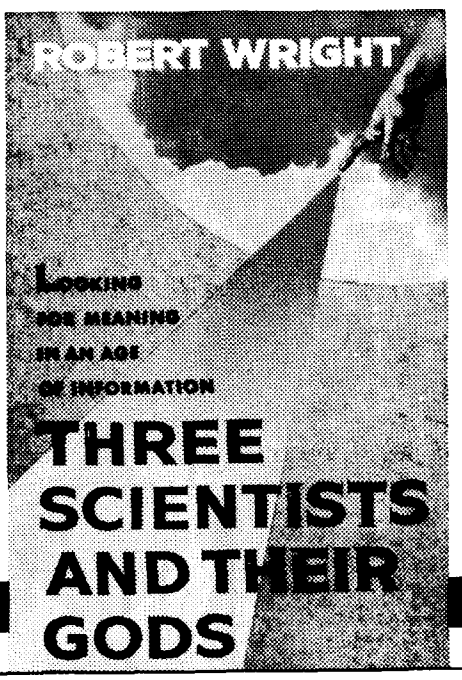
Mathews, along with a bipartisan batch of Congressional critics (including Democrats Al Gore and Tim Wirth, and Republicans John Heinz and Claudine Schneider), says that the Administration is slow and internally divided in reacting to the global warming threat, as evidenced by its effort in the Netherlands on November 6 to delay the setting of international standards for CO_2 emissions. Environmentalists contend there is no question whether CO_2 emissions will dangerously heat up the atmosphere, only when—and how long the United States will take to develop adequate measures to forestall the damage.

Mathews is calling for a $1-a-gallon gasoline tax,

"A SMASHING DEBUT...



If you've never read a whole science book through at one sitting, *Three Scientists and Their Gods* may change that. . . In format, tone, and panache, Wright's book takes popular science literature where few such enterprises have gone before." —Carlin Romano, *Philadelphia Inquirer*



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phased in over ten years, to induce conservation, reduce dependence on foreign supplies, and raise revenues ($10 billion per ten-cent increase) to close the budget deficit. Even at $2 a gallon, gas in the United States would be far cheaper than it is in most other countries, but it would force Detroit to begin meeting European standards for fuel efficiency (39 mpg in France for 1990, versus 26 right now in the United States). Rebates could be worked out to lighten the impact of the tax on the poor.

Where does a gasoline tax fit into the Bush energy strategy? Nowhere, says Henson Moore. He admits it would help combat global warming, cut the U.S. balance of payments deficit, and enhance national energy security, but "the President is against it and Congress won't vote for more than an eight- or ten-cent increase for revenue, which will have no impact on conservation. If you proposed a 50-cent increase, they'd laugh at you." There's the problem: soon, it's OPEC that will be laughing. •

Political realignment in the West?

AFTERSHOCKS

By Bill Bradley

SACRAMENTO

The seismologists' moving needles have recorded more than 4,000 aftershocks of the powerful October 17 earthquake that shook up Northern California. Most were too faint to be noticeable; a few were strong enough to shatter some windows and knock off some loosened masonry. The biggest tremor of all is the political aftershock that wasn't—that by its very absence has rocked California's political establishment.

Many politicians and civic-leader types had predicted that the sobering effect of the quake would guarantee passage of SCA (Senate Constitutional Amendment) 1, an ambitious measure placed on the June 1990 ballot by the state's political and development establishments. SCA 1 would expand freeways and transit systems by doubling the state's gasoline tax and would also relax the overall spending limit created by the late conservative initiative promoter Paul Gann. Indeed, it seemed for a time that the quake would bring the entire era of anti-government politics in California to a decisive end. There had been signs that it was winding down: urban counties have increased sales taxes for transportation improvements, and voters through the statewide initiative process have approved tough new environmental and insurance regulations and more spending for education.

Well, it turns out that the early reports of the death of the anti-government era were greatly exaggerated. Despite fresh appreciation for the good that government can do, in particular the stringent building regulations that prevented a monumental disaster and the public transit facilities that averted Bay Area gridlock, it's going to take more than Mother Nature to restore Californians' respect for their tarnished political institutions and overcome their resistance to paying for what they want.

The quake provided a rare non-partisan opportunity for politicians to show their stuff. With widespread public approval, Republican Governor George Deukmejian and Democratic legislative leaders agreed on a temporary sales tax rise to pay for repairs. The Mayor of San Francisco, Art Agnos, looked particularly good. Fortuitously, only weeks before he had put the city government through a rehearsal for just such an emergency, and his take-charge manner when the real disaster struck made people think even a liberal politician can be strong, composed, and in control. Agnos, a big backer of small business with good lines into the Asian community, has serious potential as a statewide candidate.

Pollsters are arguing about what the numbers mean. "I see no new groundswell of support for more government," Paul Maslin, newly transplanted from Washington and pollster for state Attorney General (and Democratic gubernatorial frontrunner) John Van de Kamp, told me. "Californians do seem more willing to spend, but only if they receive specific assurances as to where the money goes." The post-quake *Los Angeles Times* poll bolstered Maslin's view that the underlying anti-government mood survived the quake: it showed the SCA 1 initiative trailing, 55 percent to 25 percent. But the Field Institute's venerable California Poll had it winning, 55 percent to 35 percent, after being in a dead heat last summer.

Mervin Field, whose name the newspapers invariably follow with the epithet "dean of California pollsters," told me he thinks the *Times* poll was "loaded," because the question about SCA 1 came at the end of a long series of questions about tax increases for quake relief. Some California politicians wonder about Field's own motives, noting he has given a number of speeches calling for more government. Field's poll question called the measure, as does the ballot description prepared by Van de Kamp's office, "the Traffic Congestion Relief and Spending Limitation Measure of 1990," and euphemistically referred to its loosening of spending limits as mere "updating." That prompted Bob Mulholland, Tom Hayden's longtime political director, to note sardonically: "If you have 35 percent opposed to apple pie, you've got a huge problem." Even Field, when pressed, admits, "I'm not saying the tax revolt is going to be over with one big bang." While SCA 1 may not be dead yet, its prospects are very dicey.

On the other hand, support seems to be growing for a $2 billion rail bonds initiative sponsored by the Plan-

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ning and Conservation League, a statewide environmental group. The league's signature-gathering for that initiative, which spells out where the money will be spent, got a boost from the performance of BART, the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, in the quake's chaotic aftermath.

The fact is that Californians are deeply mistrustful and dismissive of politicians, thanks to years of negative campaigning and legislative stalemate. Only 13 percent can name their own legislators in the state Senate and Assembly, but a majority apparently think that whoever they may be, they're probably corrupt. The Capitol is in the midst of an FBI investigation into political corruption, which the feds kicked off by setting up a sham shrimp company seeking special economic development bonds. The sting operation's sham legislation passed both houses of the legislature with handsome majorities, even though the only real evidence that the company existed was that it had lobbyists.

Throughout the 1980s California's politics has been dominated by annoyingly dynamic young careerists who lead by "resonating" with the latest poll results and by sleep-inducing old-guard figures who make their own assiduous studies of the entrails of opinion. In the latter category are Governor Deukmejian and his quadrennial opponent, Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles, who both have made careers of assuring voters, in Reaganesque fashion, that with them in charge there will be little to worry about and even less to do.

Deukmejian is sliding out of office with little fanfare after a lackluster two terms. Having finally gotten a passport a few years ago, he was in Frankfurt to open the state's fifth international trade office when the quake hit. Haplessly featured in post-quake ads for CNN ("That's where I got my information"), he hopes now to be able to retire without having his famous parsimoniousness blamed for the Nimitz Freeway disaster.

As for Bradley, the one-time "Teflon Mayor" has been seared by ongoing investigations into his uncanny financial affiliations with people seeking something from the city. Meanwhile, the flow of LA politics has shifted dramatically away from Bradley's defining theme of go-go growth toward sharp criticism of badly planned growth and the attendant ills of congestion and pollution. The LA Basin, once the Houston of the West Coast in its laissez-faire attitudes, is now a stronghold of growth control sentiment.

The state's increasingly multiracial population is growing at a rate of some 700,000 a year. California will enter the 1990s trying to live off public investments made largely in the 1950s and 1960s. Although the state's economy continues to flourish, with an annual output now 50 percent greater than that of New York, large potential crises loom in education, transportation, congestion, and pollution. As a result, many politicos and editorialists here are wallowing in nostalgia for the "golden age" of building during Pat Brown's Governorship from 1959 to 1967. They conveniently forget that the excesses of the Pat Brown years—what many, including Pat's son Jerry, saw as the cost-plus cronyism of big government and the "paving over of the state"—did much to spawn the powerful movements for conservation and conservatism in the '60s and '70s. Both of these movements retain their strength and help drive public skepticism of politics and government.

The big government/big growth complex of the Pat Brown era isn't coming back. Nor can a state this complicated be governed by initiative and referendum, though heaven knows we've tried. It may be that what people here want is a lean, mean government that solves problems by outthinking them, not outspending them. That might explain why there's such strong support among voters for tough environmental regulation—80 percent in private polling for next year's omnibus "Big Green" initiative—and such slight support for new taxes that don't clearly and immediately benefit them. Of course, another way of putting it is that Californians want a lot for themselves and don't want to pay for it, which might explain why California's bonded indebtedness is at record levels under George "No New Taxes" Deukmejian.

The quake—known here as the "Pretty Big One," since the fabled really "Big One" is yet to come—reminded Californians that they can't merely go it alone, and that government can literally make the difference between life and death. It's provided an opening for political leadership. The unimaginative and fainthearted need not apply.

BILL BRADLEY, a third-generation Californian, is writing *The United States of California* for the Atlantic Monthly Press.

Voting time in Nicaragua.

ELECTION NEARING

By Humberto Belli

Arriving at the Managua airport in October, I ran into Virgilio Godoy, the Nicaraguan United Opposition's candidate for vice president. I asked him about the opposition's chances of winning the election in February. Godoy, a seasoned politician, said: "The more I see how the people rush to welcome UNO everywhere we go, the more I wonder how the Sandinistas are going to get out of this imbroglio." Daniel Ortega's cancellation of his cease-fire with the *contras* indicates that the *comandantes* might be trying to find a way.

I couldn't tell if Godoy's optimism about an UNO

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victory was justified, but the Sandinistas did seem to be allowing a relatively open contest. Visiting registration boards in Managua, Granada, and points in between, I could not help but be impressed by the prevailing atmosphere of freedom and order. UNO's leaders complained about irregularities in the rural areas, but these were attempts to curtail the registration of peasant communities believed to be opponents of the regime—not incidents of harassment or outright coercion. In 1982, by contrast, before I left Nicaragua, there were armed patrols in the streets. Government-organized mobs intimidated the opposition. There were tales of arrests, threats, and flight into exile. Last month the atmosphere was completely changed.

UNO has, however, raised other objections about serious flaws in the system that aren't immediately obvious to the casual visitor. The Supreme Electoral Council, established by Nicaraguan law as the chief arbiter of the elections, is dominated by the Sandinistas. In addition, UNO does not have a single representative in the nine regional branches of the SEC, and at most polling tables it has only a non-voting delegate. Still, the opposition is not totally defenseless against a potential attempt to steal the election. Since the Sandinistas accepted the presence of international observers, four-wheel-drive vehicles from the United Nations and the Organization of American States are a common sight on Nicaraguan highways. Several other organizations will be watching the polls as well. These impartial observers will make it difficult for any party to commit large-scale fraud without risking detection.

Apparently the Sandinistas think their concessions to international pressure were a miscalculation. They have been using all means possible to stack the deck in their favor. An evening of television-watching in Nicaragua was enough to expose their game. There are only two television stations, both of which belong to the state. Channel Six is a showcase for Sandinista propaganda. Channel Two is the one on which UNO, eight miniparties, and the Sandinista Front share 30 minutes per day. This means UNO gets one ten-minute slot every three days. Channel Six, which reaches all of Nicaragua, delivers a full-color image and good sound, whereas Channel Two broadcasts a distorted black-and-white picture that can hardly be picked up at all beyond Managua.

On Six, Sandinista commercials are aired about every 15 minutes. And of course the news has a strong pro-Sandinista tilt as well. On the eight o'clock "Noticiero Sandinista" I saw Vice President Ramírez's triumphal reception in a Pacific village. A few minutes later Comandante Arce appeared to blast UNO for "its armed activities against conscripts in northern Nicaragua." Then interviewees denounced UNO's "illicit" expenditures. The "news" ended at 8:30. Fifteen minutes after that there was a slick Sandinista spot with the slogan "We won and now go forward." At 9:04 a two-minute filmstrip commemorated President Ortega's coordina-

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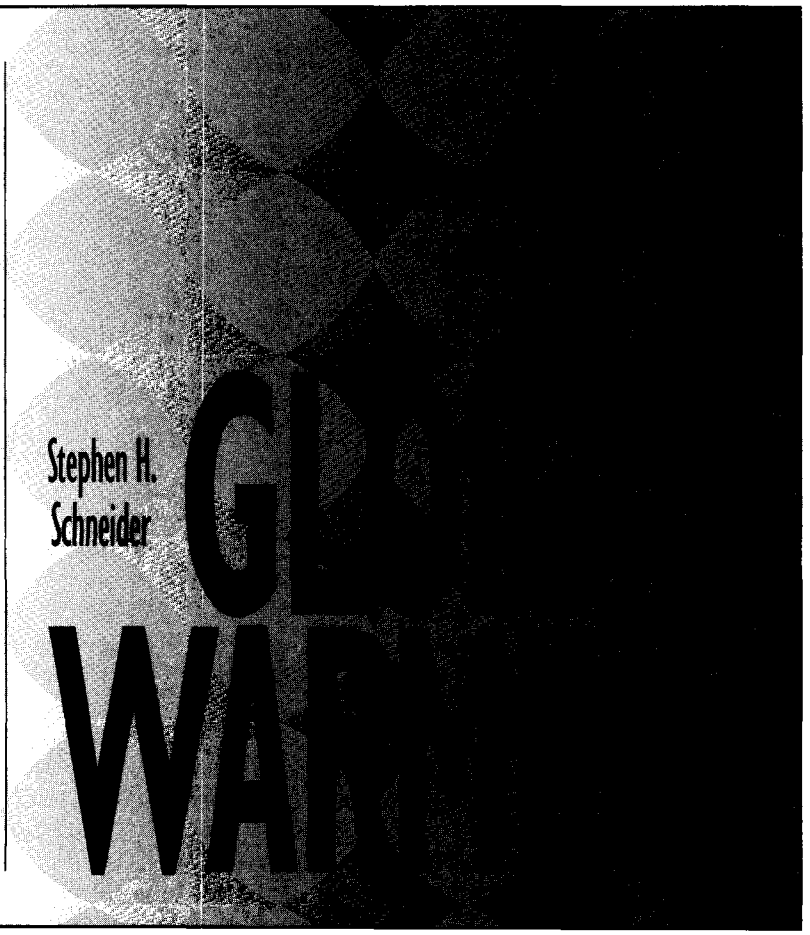

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tion of the relief operations for the victims of last year's hurricane Juana. At 9:11 a commercial promoted the benefits to the poor of the government's housing programs. At 9:33 a news brief attacking Pedro Joaquin Chamorro Jr. (son of UNO presidential candidate Violeta Chamorro) for allegedly receiving "Somocista" money was followed by a bulletin featuring a regional electoral judge's complaints against UNO.

A similar imbalance occurs in radio broadcasts. The opposition has access to only five of the nearly 25 radio stations in operation. Of these five, only one, "Radio Corporación," broadcasts nationally, and it is often off the air due to technical difficulties. Repair parts have arrived in Managua, but the station's owner has found himself in a bureaucratic nightmare as he futilely tries to get them released from customs. The technically superior radio stations all belong to either the state or the Sandinista party—a distinction without a difference. Both are state-financed and broadcast intense Sandinista propaganda.

DANIEL ORTEGA BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The confusion between state and party that characterizes the Nicaraguan political system works to the Sandinistas' advantage elsewhere as well. State resources are used in the organization of party rallies, in transporting activists, in printing and broadcasting propaganda, and in the manifold tasks of political campaigning.

Without the powerful machinery of state behind it, the opposition looks like a charity case. The official media continuously blast UNO for taking in overt and covert funds from the United States. A recent issue of the Sandinista newspaper *Barricada* claimed that the opposition had already received $26 million. *Newsweek* estimated the figure at $8 million. But a visit to UNO headquarters shows that this too must be a vast exaggeration. The desolate office is furnished only with battered desks, manual typewriters, and a few loudspeakers. UNO does not even have a car of its own.

The opposition's financial straits may be relieved by the arrival of U.S. funds voted by Congress in late October. Nine million dollars was approved, half of which—according to Nicaraguan law—can go to UNO. But U.S. law stipulates that the money can be used only to improve the electoral system (training poll watchers, voter education, etc.)—not to promote UNO's candidates or program. In the meantime, according to Antonio Lacayo, manager of UNO's campaign, the biggest donation has been $22,000, "given to us by the Nicaraguan government."

The Sandinistas' modest funding for the opposition has further complicated matters. Even if a party has only a few hundred members, it may qualify for money, media time, and other benefits if it participates. These incentives have produced eight "opposition" micro-parties that together represent less than two percent of the electorate, according to a poll conducted in late October by CID, a Costa Rican affiliate of the Gallup International Research Institutes, in conjunction with *Nuevo Diario*, a pro-government daily. Yet these micro-factions weaken UNO by reducing its access to the media and government funds.

Another institutional advantage the Sandinistas have is the call-up. While they serve in the army, 80,000 or more Nicaraguans of voting age are cut off from non-Sandinista influences, and they are subjected to two hours of "political awareness" every day. These sessions largely consist of analyzing *Barricada* and speeches of the *comandantes*. Many young men avoid the registration boards, where they are required to supply their name, age, and address, and can be dragooned on the spot. Although the Sandinistas bowed to the opposition protests by agreeing to suspend temporarily the draft in August, conscription continues, according to complaints filed by the Permanent Commission for Human Rights, Nicaragua's only independent human rights group.

There is other unfairness built into the system. The emigration of an estimated 600,000 Nicaraguans in the past decade means that many of the opposition's most

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seasoned activists and supporters aren't around to participate.

Despite all of these precautions, there is plenty of evidence that the Sandinistas still fear an adverse electoral outcome. Accompanying UNO's presidential candidate, Violeta Chamorro, on campaign stops in poor neighborhoods of Managua one night, I was struck by the sight of spontaneous crowds cheering her wherever she went. Chamorro herself is sanguine about her ticket's prospects. "I went to Chichigalpa a couple of weeks ago," she told me, "and this time the crowd was at least four times bigger than the one that came to greet Daniel Ortega and me when we entered the country as junta leaders in 1979."

A comparison with the 1984 elections tends to bear her out. The Sandinistas claimed that they had won with 65 percent of the vote, a meaningless figure, since most opposition forces boycotted the election. Today the opposition is united. Another key difference is that the country's economic woes are far worse than they were in 1984. A precipitate decline in living standards, combined with skyrocketing inflation and massive unemployment, has surely hurt the Sandinistas' popular support, notwithstanding the flight of a vast number of refugees.

According to the CID-Gallup poll, about 30 percent of the public was undecided. This betrays a reluctance to disclose political leanings to strangers rather than a true lack of preference. When I polled people myself in 1981, I sensed a good deal of fear in regard to political questions. But more and more are speaking their minds. Chamorro's support has increased to 40 percent while Ortega's has stabilized at around 30 percent. The poll has her running ahead by 40 percent to 29 percent. Many of the "undecided" will keep their preferences to themselves until election day. But if they feel secure in the confidentiality of their votes, the *comandantes* may have a bad day.

The Sandinista leaders, of course, are men with keen political instincts. If they suspect they may be outvoted, what would they do? Can an escalation of the war against the *contras* serve as a way out of their present dilemma? Possibly. The government might allow the electoral process to proceed unimpeded in most of the urban-Pacific area, while escalating military operations in the countryside, where dissatisfaction with the regime runs high. That would avoid the outcry that would result from torpedoing the whole process, yet make it difficult for the opposition, as well as for observers, to do their work. Sandinista strategists may be aware that knocking off five or ten percent of the adversary's vote—which disruption in the countryside could accomplish—may be all that's needed to tilt the scales in their favor.

HUMBERTO BELLI, a sociology professor at the Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, is chairman of the Puebla Institute.

Cory's endangered revolution.

VIGILANTE JUSTICE

By James Ross

On the night of April 22, 1989, in a barrio in the Philippine hinterland, two dozen anti-Communist vigilantes and uniformed militiamen appeared at the home of Ernesto Escasenas. While his wife and six children watched, the men bound Escasenas's arms and led him away. Minutes later, shricks resounded from the forest nearby. Estralita Escasenas recounted: "At sunrise, we went to the place where we heard the agony to look for my husband. We found his dead body 80 meters from our place. His throat was slit from ear to ear. Both ears of my husband were cut, detached from his head."

In President Corazon Aquino's State of the Nation address in July 1988, she had called for the disbanding of "vigilante" groups, responsible for numerous human rights abuses nationwide, and for their replacement by unarmed town watch organizations and a volunteer militia. A few days later, the national defense secretary, retired Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, said anti-Communist vigilantes must not be disbanded because they had helped turn the tide against the 20-year-old insurgency. More than a year later, Ramos seems to have won. The vigilante groups remain. So do the acts of murder, torture, and illegal arrest that led Aquino to call for their disbanding.

The resistance of the Philippine military to disbanding or even disarming vigilante groups is especially evident in Davao City in Mindanao. Davao City is the birthplace of the Alsa Masa ("Masses Arise"), which served as a model for vigilante groups throughout the country. Maj. Gen. Ramon Montano, chief of the Philippine Constabulary, assured local officials in March that the Alsa Masa "cannot be disbanded without due process." Besides, he added with unintended irony, "Its human rights record is even better than some armed forces units." An Alsa Masa rally four months later attracted some 10,000 members, many carrying firearms. This did not surprise the mayor of Davao City, Rodrigo Duterte, who noted that "the military will give guns to everybody who claims they are anti-Communist, so long as the supply is there."

The continued presence of vigilantes in many regions of the Philippines is just one facet of a broader issue: the military's free hand in counterinsurgency policy. Since the fall of Ferdinand Marcos in February 1986, the Aquino government has taken important steps to reestablish democratic institutions: a new constitution, an

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independent judiciary, a democratically elected congress. But outside the capital such reforms have had little impact; the military often remains the predominant government presence. Although there is no longer a dictator calling the shots, the fundamental approach to the insurgency has remained the same.

The Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the 24,000-strong New People's Army (NPA), could someday be militarily capable of toppling the government. But efforts by Philippine armed forces (and the U.S. Government) to play up NPA atrocities, such as the recent massacre of 37 people in Mindanao, imply that the NPA maintains control of rural areas through terror alone. In truth, Communist efforts toward land reform, public health, and a simple justice system, though often accompanied by violence against civilians, have in themselves gained popular support in areas long neglected by the government. A counterinsurgency program dominated by the military simply cannot address the complex problems of the Philippine countryside.

The fate of the vigilantes has not been the only source of dispute between the military and the civilian government. The 1987 constitution calls for the dissolution of the Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF), a notorious militia created during the Marcos years. The military resisted this for more than a year. It only began to eliminate CHDF units when the new Civilian Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGUs) were organized in their place. The aim of the CAFGUs is to bolster the Philippine army with low-cost, part-time militiamen deployed in their home areas. But with 45 days of training or less, meager pay, and irregular supervision by army personnel, the CAFGUs are of debatable military value. It has become a truism among the military's critics that the new CAFGUs are just CHDFs renamed—"same dog with a different collar," as a Manila editorial put it—and CAFGU abuses reported in recent months have given credence to this view.

To distinguish the CAFGUs from the CHDFs, the military points to regulations for the careful screening and supervising of recruits. In some areas these procedures seem to be followed; in others, particularly those with much NPA activity, they are ignored. Convicted criminals and paramilitary group members with records of abuse have been inducted. Baldomero Lopez, an infamous vigilante leader wanted for the 1987 murder of six people, now commands a group of CAFGUs. Although CAFGU regulations call for civilian officials to be consulted about the selection of recruits, efforts by local officials to exert influence are often futile. Ceferino Paredes, governor of Agusan del Sur, related the case of a man inducted over the objections of a town mayor; the military only dismissed him after he shot an army officer. Moreover, the military, which views the CAFGUs as a potentially decisive force in combating the NPA, has given local officials little choice as to whether CAFGUs will be deployed in their neighborhoods and towns.

CAFGU members increasingly appear alongside vigilantes in accounts of serious human rights abuses. Some incidents are the result of unsupervised but well-armed CAFGU members taking the law into their own hands; others suggest the complicity of the local military. Either way, CAFGU members are unlikely to be prosecuted, especially when they claim, with or without basis, that their victims were NPA rebels or sympathizers.

The military's domination of the civilian government is nowhere felt more strongly than in the justice system, where the military has proved adept at protecting its own. For instance, six human rights lawyers have been gunned down since late 1987 under circumstances that suggest military complicity, and in only one case have there been any arrests. As best as can be determined, not a single member of the Philippine military has been convicted of a serious human rights violation since Aquino came to power in 1986. Even the government's Commission on Human Rights, responsible for investigating military and NPA abuses, is looking more like a military headquarters than an independent civilian organization. The commissioner in charge of investigations is a former military judge advocate general, and staff positions are increasingly filled with retired army officers.

In July a military tribunal acquitted all 20 soldiers charged with the highly publicized massacre of 17 people, including six children, at Lupao in 1987. This despite the fact that all six adult survivors gave detailed testimony of the killings and positively identified four of the defendants. And this was a triumph of justice, relatively speaking. Most cases don't make it this far. Victims and their families, fearful of retribution, rarely are willing to press charges against military personnel or military-backed vigilantes. Even prosecutors can be intimidated. Recently a prosecutor in Cebu was forced to leave the city after continuing threats. And in August a government lawyer in Samar was turned away at gunpoint from a military base where she had hoped to interview a detainee held incommunicado for several months.

The Philippine Congress may soon enact legislation that would shift jurisdiction over human rights abuses by military and police personnel from military to civilian courts. And the Bush Administration is contemplating financial aid for judicial reform. However, so long as there is no cooperation from the military high command, government prosecutors will be hard-pressed to find victims and witnesses willing to come forward. The rural peasantry will continue to rely on the "revolutionary justice" of the Communist insurgents—bloody and brutal but accessible, at least, to the impoverished barrio-dweller.

A 1985 staff report to the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence noted that military human rights abuses were among the most important reasons for popular support of the NPA. Yet the U.S. Government has ignored this lesson of the Marcos years and, at the expense of civilian rule, has pressed for a military solution to the insurgency. According to the journalist Gregg Jones, author of *Red Revolution*, the U.S. Defense Department and the CIA encouraged the

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Philippine military to undermine efforts by the Aquino Administration in 1986 to reach a cease-fire agreement with the NPA. The Bush Administration appears to be following a similar path. Vice President Quayle recently announced that the Administration might ask Congress to make the Philippine security force an exception to the general ban on U.S. aid for police training and assistance. The ban was enacted in 1974 to keep the United States from subsidizing human rights violators.

U.S. Embassy officials say they raise human rights issues with their Philippine counterparts privately, and in general try to play up the positive. The positive approach also seems to have been applied to the Philippine military. This year on July 4, Philippine-American Friendship Day, the embassy gave an award to Lt. Col. Romeo Maganto for his "dedication to duty and professionalism" in service to the embassy, which is a focal point for anti-American demonstrations. Maganto's dismal human rights record did not seem to give the State Department pause. Security forces under his command have conducted numerous "saturation drives" in Manila's slums, rounding up the residents of entire neighborhoods, questioning them, and then illegally detaining some. NPA suspects in Maganto's custody have been subjected to electric shock and beatings. But whatever human rights concerns the United States may be raising in private, the public message to the Philippine military is very different.

The blanket U.S. support for the Philippine armed forces means that the Aquino government will be helpless in the face of its own military (to which it feels indebted for remaining loyal during five right-wing coup attempts). Nonetheless, the policy makes a cynical kind of sense for President Bush: the Administration can demonstrate enthusiastic support for a popular president and a democratically elected government, while quietly promoting the military's unrestrained conduct of anti-Communist counterinsurgency.

But this is shortsighted. When 16-year-old Jerry Escasenas saw the mutilated body of his father, he vowed to take revenge. So long as the military is the predominant source of government authority, the only avenue to justice may be for him to become an NPA guerrilla.

JAMES ROSS is Asia Program staff attorney at the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights.

Pretoria's crumbling 'pigmentocracy.'

THE GROUP

By John Carlin

JOHANNESBURG

South Africa is the only country in the world that requires every citizen to be classified according to race. It is also the only country where a person may change race without having to undergo surgery.

All South Africans have the right to appeal to the Race Classification Board at the Ministry of Home Affairs to contest the racial definition imposed upon them at birth. Last year, according to the official figures, 1,142 people were successful. The great majority were driven, not surprisingly, by a desire for upward mobility on the racial ladder. Thus 514 "Coloreds" managed to become "White," and 316 "Blacks" to become "Colored." On inspired days, South Africa's bureaucratic alchemy produced even more spectacular results: four Chinese became White; four Indians became White; two Blacks became Indian; and, dazzlingly, one Colored became Chinese.

Most of the Race Classification Board's work consists of sifting through birth certificates and other documents to establish the blood lineage of each "applicant." In borderline cases the applicant is summoned before members of the board, who scrutinize skin color, "deportment" (meaning, as the statute book puts it, the way people walk), and speech inflection. If board members are still in doubt, they might then try "the comb test." Running a comb through the applicant's hair can yield decisive information. Degree of curl tightness, it has been scientifically ascertained, offers as good an indication as any of race.

Why do people subject themselves to these indignities? It would be tempting to say that it was because of their democratic desire for the vote. But in most cases the reasons are more mundane. It may be because black people receive worse education, worse health care, worse housing, worse transport, and lower pensions than so-called "coloreds," who, in turn, are worse off at every turn than whites. It may be because the lighter the shade of the skin, the better the career opportunities and creditworthiness at banks. More often than not,

JOHN CARLIN is the Southern Africa correspondent of the London *Independent*.

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however, it is a problem of marriage. Because the Group Areas Act requires blacks to live in Black areas, "coloreds" in Colored areas, etc., a difficulty arises when a couple marry across the color line. The local housing authorities, and sometimes the neighbors, can cause all sorts of problems. This explains why last year 13 Whites chose to become Colored and 15 Coloreds chose to become Black.

To dwell on these absurd tangles is to draw attention to the essence of apartheid, the essence of what the whole world finds objectionable about the South African system—namely the Population Registration Act, according to which all South Africans must be classified according to race. From that law springs every other iniquity. Scrap it, said a senior Cabinet minister, Chris Heunis, in April 1987, and you will be faced with "the collapse of the present constitutional system" and no possibility of implementing a new system, because "parliament would have been eliminated."

Passed by the National Party in 1950, two years after coming to power, this act is the foundation stone of apartheid, of "the pigmentocracy," as a South African newspaper recently described it. And amid all the euphoria, all the expectation generated by the fresh style of government of the new president, F. W. de Klerk, it is imperative to recognize that he has shown no indication of any willingness to remove that act from the statute books.

Under de Klerk, the National Party has made it abundantly clear that it remains wedded to what it euphemistically describes as the idea of "groups." Indeed, the phrase "wedded to the idea of groups" has been coined by none other than the president's older brother, Willem de Klerk, a distinguished academic and journalist who frequently bemoans what he perceives to be the tragic shortsightedness of the ruling Afrikaner elite.

Sample Terreblanche is another Afrikaner academic who has undergone a "road to Damascus" experience. A former National Party devotee who worked as an adviser to former President P. W. Botha until 1987, Terreblanche described this racial fixation of his erstwhile colleagues in a recent speech as an idea that has fossilized and lodged itself inside Nationalist heads. The word "group" recurs again and again in the National Party manifesto, the so-called "Five Year Plan of Action" prepared for the white parliamentary election on September 6. There must be no "group domination," "group rights must be protected," and "groups must be defined for political participation," the manifesto says. The point is that in whatever new dispensation that emerges from the much-trumpeted negotiations between de Klerk and black leaders, a non-racial democracy is not acceptable. The finance minister, Barend du Plessis, is perceived to be well to the left of de Klerk, but even he insisted in a speech in late October that "group rights"—i.e., white political and economic privilege—were guaranteed. The same week the justice minister, Kobie Coetsee, declared that the group concept simply needed to be "marketed" more effectively.

This means, as Coetsee said, that the National Party rejects out of hand the idea of voting "on a common voters' roll." De Klerk said exactly the same thing in his electoral campaign speeches. In Johannesburg on August 16, before a constituency where the anti-apartheid Democratic Party was the main rival, he said: "The DP wants majority rule at all levels of government. . . . If you accept majority rule, you must vote DP."

De Klerk is always promising a "drastically changed" "new South Africa." If it is not majority rule, "one-man-one-vote, winner takes all" (to quote a phrase spit out scornfully by Nationalists), that de Klerk envisages, what is it? "In stark contrast to the DP," he said in the same speech, "stands the National Party. . . . We want power-sharing without domination and with effective protection of group and minority rights." There it is. He wants to share power, but without losing white control. And there it is, too, that the oft-made analogy between de Klerk and Gorbachev holds: reform, but up to a point. De Klerk has said it in meetings with foreign ambassadors: "Don't expect me to reform myself out of power."

He also says, "There is no magic formula to solve South Africa's problems." But a formula of sorts he does have. As Cabinet ministers have described it to foreign journalists, they foresee blacks getting the vote, but in a way that assures that their overwhelming majority is not proportionately reflected in terms of power. If this sounds complicated, it gets worse. The idea would be to divide the country into some 20 political groups (that word again!) reflecting the traditional ethnic divisions of the black population: Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, etc. People would vote only within their "groups" in such a manner that the white "group" would not be in a minority.

It all becomes still more convoluted, but suffice it to say that it is on this point that the essential difference lies between the vision of South Africa held by its present white rulers and the vision held by Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress (of which he is a leader), and the overwhelming majority of remaining black political leaders and organizations. This vision, one shared by every country in the world that takes a remote interest in South Africa, is of a unitary state—"one South Africa," the ANC says—in which the issue of race does not enter the picture. It is a vision, in short, of a non-racial democracy.

Walter Sisulu, the veteran ANC leader and close associate of Mandela's released from prison in October, declared upon the evening of his first day of freedom in 26 years: "We believe that in our lifetime there will be a government that includes the blacks. But we don't judge persons in terms of color. We're talking in terms of a democratic movement where a white man can be a president and where a black man can be president. There is no question of taking a position on the basis of color."

So when black and white leaders eventually sit around a table to negotiate the terms of South Africa's

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political future, there is little reason to believe that there will be any quick, dramatic progress. It will be the proverbial case of the immovable object meeting the unstoppable force.

There is, though, an imponderable, an X factor, which might make the black force all the more unstoppable. And it is de Klerk himself who is providing the momentum. In what has come to be known variously as "South African *glasnost*," "the Pretoria spring," and, in the ungainly term, "Pretoriastroika," de Klerk has provided the ANC with a space to operate politically that no one would have imagined before he took office on September 20, and that, indeed, is unprecedented since the ANC was legally "banned" and driven underground in 1960.

He ordered the unconditional release of Sisulu and six other ANC veterans of the Mandela vintage, allowing them to act publicly with the same degree of freedom granted to the parliamentary political parties. Most dramatically, de Klerk granted permission for a rally to be held at a Soweto soccer stadium on October 29 to welcome home the ANC men. With some 70,000 people present, it was the biggest political meeting since the ANC was founded in 1912. In strict terms, it was illegal, since the ANC remains banned. But there are signs that de Klerk will do more than bend the rules. He has indicated that he will soon start formally abolishing the long-standing "emergency" laws restricting political activity, and that he will release Mandela within the next four months.

De Klerk is driven by a need to appease international opinion and, internally, by the desire to create what he calls a favorable "political climate" for negotiations. This is where the unpredictable X factor comes in. De Klerk means to cede a great deal in terms of what academics here call the "peripheral" or "procedural" issues, but he will be niggardly when it comes to the core issue of power. However, by relinquishing a degree of control unheard of during the National Party's 41 years of relentless social and political engineering, de Klerk can do no more than hope things will turn out the way he plans.

In transforming South Africa's political climate, de Klerk is handing his opponents the instruments to engage in a fair political fight. The black "A team" is back on the field. The politically unsophisticated, often hotheaded youths who, in their absence, have led the "liberation struggle" inside the country are being pushed to the sidelines. For the moment at least, politics is not waged at the level of stone-throwing youths and gun-toting policemen. It is a game in which the most nimble-witted, most organized, and most cunning will win out. Each side is engaged in the subtle business of dividing and confusing the opposition, not killing them or locking them up.

Neither side has any doubts about what the other seeks, or about their vastly different objectives. Compromises will have to be made on both sides, for neither is at the point of defeat. These will not be the type of negotiations in which what essentially is discussed are the terms of the surrender. (Justice Minister Coetsee declared: "We reject surrender as a model. It is not even an option.") They will be long, grinding negotiations, thwarted by mutually unacceptable proposals, stubborn posturings, and periods of apparent stalemate.

Both camps will be hampered by extremists, black and white, who do not favor the compromises implicit in negotiations, who prefer all-out violence, with the winner devouring what is left of the cake. That problem plagues both Mandela and de Klerk. And de Klerk has an added worry. Always in the back of his mind lies the fear of a Communist takeover, or of a one-party state in the manner of most of Africa. (A European ambassador recently noted: "The Nationalists are hypnotized by the example of Africa.") And certainly the South African Communist Party wields great influence inside the ANC. But even it has recognized, as spelled out in a recent document called "Path to Power," that the primary objective is "a national democracy" along Western lines. The Soviet Union, which has financed the ANC's rather ineffectual "armed struggle," favors negotiations, and was even described this year by South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha as "part of the solution." Both the Soviet Union and the ANC seem to think that communism may come afterward, but that is another story, another debate, likely to be affected by developments in the Soviet bloc.

Sisulu, in an interview with British reporters a week after his release, said he was concerned at present not with promoting socialism, which he described as "merely an ideal," but with achieving a "broad and unifying national democracy." The central issue now in South Africa is the racial one. Ideological matters can wait until a level of political normality has been reached, where politics are conducted free of biological restraints.

Meanwhile, by traveling further than expected down the "procedural" road, de Klerk has raised expectations dangerously, by his standards, both at home and abroad. He has led people to believe that he means to follow his steps to their logical conclusion. Or rather, the conclusion dictated by the logic of the black majority backed by the rest of the world. The Nationalist perception of "drastic change" is, after all, merely to reform apartheid. De Klerk will battle for all he is worth to preserve the core of Nationalist Party ideology: racially classified political groups. He said in a recent speech that the five years of his parliamentary mandate would be a period of "orderly but reasonably dramatic revolution." By which he meant change, but on his own terms and at his own pace.

The National Party, however, cannot control the course of history forever. It is up to the black political leaders to seize the opportunities, to wrest the initiative from de Klerk's hands, to impose their own terms, and to accelerate past him on the road to what Sisulu has called "a colorblind democracy." They have all to play for. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Unique Characters

A protagonist with cerebral palsy. Who could approach such a film with anything but a stony heart? What a cheap exercise in heart-tug. What a predictable exhibition of trick acting.

What a surprise. **My Left Foot** (Miramax) is taken from the autobiography of that title by Christy Brown, the Dublin writer and painter who, twisted by cerebral palsy, made a name for himself with his left foot, which was the only part of his body that he could use for typing and painting. Even that statement sounds like a plea for pity. But the film that Jim Sheridan and Shane Connaughton have written and that Sheridan has directed is as disdainful of pity as Christy was. If you are wary of affirmations of the human spirit—those upbeat endings affixed to grim plays and films to prove that Pippa is still passing—*My Left Foot* will gratify you: because what is affirmed here is a healthy ego in a recalcitrant body. Christy was concerned not to endorse the powers that had afflicted him, but to beat them at their own game.

He was born in 1932, one of a large brood of children. His father was a poor Dublin bricklayer, his mother a patient, strong woman. Into the crowded and scraping household comes this impaired boy (we see most of this in flashback), who is treated in a particularly touching way. The family, especially the father, think he is mentally deficient—he can't speak—and they are nonetheless loving. When the boy gets to be about 11 or 12, he begins to show, by scribbling with a piece of chalk between his toes and by muzzy words he begins to emit, that he is far above normal. Then the family, never neglectful, really gather round.

Not like the Cratchit family with Tiny Tim. There are arguments, drinking bouts, accidents, and troubles. These only make Christy's struggle for education and realization more affecting because, most of the time, in his trussed crab way, he is just one more member of the group, angry and fearful and gleeful. He can even be goalkeeper in the street football game, locking the ball in with his head.

We move to his late adolescence and early manhood when he is taken on as a patient by a youngish woman doctor, who helps him enormously, gets him a one-man show of his paintings, and is truly pained when he falls in love with her and she has to tell him she is engaged. Christy weathers the internal storm, comes out a recognized author and painter, and eventually—in 1972—marries a nurse he meets at a reception in his honor. (This reception frames the film.) We don't see Christy's death, which occurred in 1981.

Sheridan and Connaughton wrote so as to give fullness to the story, to keep it from being a Jerry Lewis telethon. (For instance, Christy tipples.) Sheridan, who is a theater director making his film debut, has worked economically, unostentatiously, and has brought forth some marvelous acting.

First honors to Hugh O'Conor, the 12-year-old who has had TV and theater experience and who brings to the young Christy such veracity of outer helplessness and inner turmoil that Daniel Day-Lewis, the grown Christy, has only, in a sense, to grow from him. This is in no way to slight Day-Lewis. With this performance he further opens up the reaches of his talent (and, not to be cynical, his luck in finding good roles). He was the gay punk in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the Edwardian snob in *A Room with a View*, the bewildered art dealer in *Stars and Bars*, and the surgeon in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Concurrently, he has had a busy TV and theater life in Britain, including a recent Hamlet at the National. In *My Left Foot* every atom of his being is concentrated on the man within the twisted body, understanding the ease with which physical affliction can be acted and insisting on going far beyond that. Few interiors of the impaired have been better lighted in film.

And what a cast—not supporting but embracing. Ray McAnally (who died soon after this film was finished) gives the working-class father the best texture of leather-bound humanity since Trevor Howard's comparable role in *Sons and Lovers*. And those Irish women! Brenda Fricker as the mother is a more endearing Erda, sturdy and wise. Fiona Shaw as the doctor, an odd arrowhead beauty, is captivating. Ruth McCabe as the nurse has the quiet wit and the quiet sex that Irish women are insufficiently famous for.

My Left Foot is neither cheery nor depressing. It's the utterly engrossing account of a human being with more impediments than most of us who, with the

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Crimes and Misdemeanors. *Woody Allen—the writer and director—at his best. (As actor, there is no best.) Civilization as veneer, divine justice, purpose in life—all trenchantly examined in slick, high-tech Manhattan. (Reviewed 11/13/89)* **High Fidelity.** *The work and the lives of the Guarneri Quartet rendered in a perceptive, charming documentary by Allan Miller, musician and filmmaker. (9/18&25/89)* **sex, lies, and videotape.** *Four young people moving through a delicately wrought texture of desires and surprises. Steven Soderbergh's first film is extraordinary. (9/4/89)* **Yaaba.** *From Burkina Faso. A simple story of an African village told with a simplicity that bespeaks skill and affection. (11/13/89)* **—SK**

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love of those around him, soldiered on. And up.

Last month a man died in Rome at 87 who had affected the film experience of millions around the world and yet was known to few of them. Cesare Zavattini was one of those rare and important figures—screenwriters who have had a huge influence on the careers of certain directors, even on certain periods. Zavattini, along with Suso Cecchi D'Amico, is one of the two outstanding writers of postwar Italian film. He wrote screenplays for many directors, including Blasetti and Visconti, but his signal work was done for Vittorio De Sica. Chief among these films are *The Bicycle Thief*, *Miracle in Milan*, *Umberto D.*, *Two Women*, and *A Brief Vacation*. Not all of Zavattini's screenplays were originals, but then neither were Boito's librettos.

He was a short, stocky, energetic man with a bald head and an undershot jaw, full of film talk and radical politics. Twenty-five years ago I visited him in his Rome apartment, and despite my strangulated Italian (he knew no English), it was an exhilarating morning.

So far as I could judge, he served De Sica in something of the same way that Edmund Wilson had served Scott Fitzgerald, as socio-political conscience. The day before we met, I had been in a sound studio where De Sica was supervising the music recording for *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, to which Zavattini had contributed but which had no wisp of the usual CZ social touch. Diffidently I mentioned this. He agreed vigorously, then pointed to the pile of five or six manuscripts on a corner of his huge desk. Those, he said, were the socially concerned films that he and De Sica could not get financed. So . . .

On the walls of his apartment were dozens of framed tiny paintings, some no larger than a postcard. (You can see some of them on the jacket of his autobiography, *Scenes from a Cinematic Life*, Prentice Hall, 1970.) I asked about them, and he said that when he first came to Rome, he went to an art gallery, was struck by a certain painter's work but couldn't afford to buy anything. He wrote to the painter, told him how much money he could spend, and asked what he could get for it. The painter sent him a postcard-size painting, executed for him. Since then, as time and fortune advanced, Zavattini had written to all the painters he admired, including some big names, and had commissioned postcard-size paintings. Hence this collection.

A unique, nubbly, wry character. I presume to hope that these comments will serve as a small note of thanks from all of us who are indebted to him. •

Rebellion and Repression in the Philippines

Richard J. Kessler

Drawing on recently declassified printed sources and interviews with guerrillas and military personnel, a highly regarded authority on U.S. foreign policy and Asian politics investigates the two principal adversaries in the current struggle to wrest control of the Philippines from the Aquino government—the Communist New People's Army and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

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The shocking story of Colombia's habit.

The Kingdom of Cocaine

BY TINA ROSENBERG

Kings of Cocaine is a gory, noisy book. It tells the story of the colorful Medellín traffickers colorfully. It begins with a machine-gun massacre in a Miami parking lot in 1979, and it ends with the sentencing of Carlos Lehder, the traffickers' coked-up, Hitler-loving transportation wizard, in 1988. In between is a parade of corrupt politicos, martyred judges, brave journalists, nervous cops, shoot-outs, assassinations, kidnappings, raids, seizures, crackdowns, and a death squad or two.

The book is a meticulously researched Western. (We learn that narcotics chief Jaime Ramírez's last meal was pigs' knuckles; that Lehder kept 25-pound dumbbells in his cell.) Every time a new honest sheriff comes to town we know that he will not survive the chapter. Practically nobody shown getting into a car gets out again. And if this is familiar stuff, that is because Guy Gugliotta and Jeff Leen broke many of these stories in the *Miami Herald*. Their series (which ran unsigned) was translated and reprinted in all of Bogotá's newspapers, which was the only way that Colombians could read about the rise of cocaine in their own country.

Gugliotta and Leen have written as complete a story of the Medellín traffickers as we are likely to get. Many of the original protagonists of the story are no longer alive, and it is almost as hard to interview live traffickers as it is to interview dead ones. As in other recent books about drug trafficking, such as *Desperado* by Elaine Shannon and *The Cocaine Wars* by Paul Eddy, Hugo Sabogal, and Sara Walden, the stories that receive the most thorough treatment from Gugliotta and Leen are the ones that have to do with law enforcement: the major assassinations, the arrests, the cocaine seizures. This is partly because they make for a gripping narrative, partly because policemen are more reliable sources than criminals, and most important, because they are the people, and their activities are the events, about which it is possible to report.

TINA ROSENBERG is working on a book about violence in Latin America, to be published by Morrow.

The difficulties of penetrating the drug world mean that reporters have to rely disproportionately on interviews with Colombian and U.S. police, Drug Enforcement Administration officials, and dealers-turned-informants. Thus, Gugliotta and Leen's book follows Lehder's entire career through his sentencing, noting along the way such details as the changing length of his hair, even though by the time of his arrest he was a gibbering addict, marginalized by his former associates, no longer an important man. What journalists have established, in their reports and in their books, as the history of the traffickers is really the history of the traffickers' bouts with the law.

Kings of Cocaine: Inside the Medellín Cartel
by Guy Gugliotta and Jeff Leen
(Simon and Schuster, 391 pp., $19.95)

After about the fifth assassination of a major Colombian hero in *Kings of Cocaine*, and the subsequent police crackdown and cocaine seizure, one starts to wonder if such a history misses the point. For the book's real lesson, the idea most important for thinking about cocaine today, is made only indirectly. It is that in Colombia crackdowns come and go, huge seizures come and go, arrests come and go, martyrs come and go . . . and cocaine remains.

From 1980 to 1988, the United States spent more than $10 billion to fight cocaine. Colombia paid a much higher price in blood. The money went principally to law enforcement: destroying coca farms; aiding the Colombian police and military in arresting traffickers, dismantling labs, and capturing cocaine and its ingredients in Colombia; keeping drugs from crossing borders; and arresting traffickers and users in the United States. The aim of these measures is to make cocaine prohibitively expensive or completely unavailable to users. President Bush's "new" drug policy follows the same lines, proposing to diminish the use of cocaine and crack through tougher law enforcement in the United States and in South America. It is the widely accepted strategy for solving the drug problem in a political climate where voters like their government officials to appear tough on drugs.

Over the same eight-year period, however, coca fields in the Andes increased by 250 percent. The supply of cocaine in the United States multiplied by ten. Colombia now produces over seven times more cocaine than the American market can absorb. Prices dropped to one-fifth of their 1980 level, with the purity of street coke rising from 12 to 80 percent. In 1980 a kilogram of cocaine cost $60,000 wholesale in Miami. Last year it cost $10,000, and it was stronger stuff and easier to find.

Measured by on-the-ground seizures in Colombia, 1989 has been an excellent year for the war on drugs. More cocaine was seized by August of this year than in all of 1988. By August police had seized twice as much ether as in 1988, three times as much acetone, and eight times as much ammonia. Between April 1988, when a serious crackdown began, and August 1989, Colombia seized 21 tons of cocaine and destroyed 300 laboratories. Yet measured by the price and the probable quantity of drugs available in the United States, it was as if none of this ever happened. In August 1989 coke cost $11,000 a kilo in Miami, close to the all-time low. The seizures seemed to have no effect at all on the drug problem in the United States.

From time to time, the price of cocaine has risen. After each crackdown in Colombia, including the recent crackdown following the assassination on August 18 of Luis Carlos Galán, the popular presidential candidate, the price of cocaine has momentarily risen and then supply dropped. But these are blips on the chart. The real line is steadily moving in the wrong direction, insultingly impervious to all our efforts.

There is nothing about cocaine that makes it inherently resistant to law enforcement. Cocaine came to Colombia, for example, because law enforcement eradicated its trafficking in Chile. The Chilean traffickers used to buy coca leaf from Peru and Bolivia, process it, and ship it north; but when Gen. Augusto Pinochet took power in a coup in 1973, he arrested the traffickers, and the cocaine industry disappeared from Chile. Cocaine trafficking was a tiny business of no importance to Chilean society. The arrests of a few dozen people took care of the problem.

Colombia's situation is completely different. Colombia is addicted to cocaine. Cocaine provides employment for Colombia's people and hard currency for the national treasury. It has destroyed, through corruption or violence, the institutions that might once have been able to

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fight it. It has changed many people's values to the point where trafficking is an accepted, even an admired, activity. There is no segment of Colombian society that has not made its pact with cocaine: the military, the guerrillas, the banks, the Catholic Church, industry, the courts, the police. Attempts to fight cocaine trafficking have brought about the deaths of beloved national figures as well as many ordinary Colombians. The wave of bombings and assassinations in response to the current crackdown, especially in response to President Virgilio Barco's decision to revive the extradition treaty with the United States, is scaring the hell out of ordinary people, who are questioning whether such a fight is worth it. Law enforcement doesn't work because as presently implemented it is in the interests of practically nobody in Colombia.

Colombia and cocaine became synonymous because Colombia was blessed with the rather unnatural resource of good businessmen. Unlike Peru or Bolivia, Colombia has neither land suitable for coca farming nor a history of coca use in its indigenous culture. Only about 15 percent of the coca leaf used in the business is grown in Colombia. Coca leaf is grown and stomped into paste mainly in Peru and Bolivia, where Indians have grown and chewed coca leaves for centuries. All the Colombians do is process the paste and export it to the United States, to Canada, and increasingly to Europe.

Colombia's advantages are its proximity to its major market and the entrepreneurial spirit of its people, particularly of the Paisas, as those from Medellín's state of Antioquia are called. Medellín is a beautiful, modern city of gardens and glass skyscrapers, and its people are hardworking, skillful entrepreneurs, long the captains of Colombia's legal and illegal industry. They dominate Colombian textiles, flowers, coffee, cattle, marijuana, and smuggling. Medellín's smugglers had helped the Chilean traffickers bring cocaine into the United States, and when cocaine was driven from Chile, the Paisas took over.

Colombia's new traffickers were of two kinds. There were the old smugglers, who expanded from cigarettes and electronic goods into cocaine. Among them was Fabio Restrepo, whose nephew, Jorge Luis Ochoa, now 40, soon became one of the biggest in the business. And there were the young toughs, who tended to be more violent. Pablo Escobar, today at 39 the richest criminal in the world, was a small-town hood from Envigado, a Medellín suburb, who started his career stealing gravestones, rubbing off the inscriptions, and reselling them. In 1976 Escobar was arrested for carrying 39 pounds of cocaine in the spare tire of his car. It was the largest coke bust in Medellín that year; the cops who arrested him and two of the judges on the case were later shot to death, and Escobar has never been arrested since.

Escobar and Ochoa were two of hundreds of small-time traffickers. What brought these Colombians to the top of the business was their link with Carlos Lehder. He was a German-Colombian who had come to the United States when he was 15. In 1973 Lehder was arrested for smuggling marijuana, and in prison he met other smugglers who offered distribution outlets in the United States for a more profitable business: cocaine. Out of prison, Lehder bought a place on Norman's Cay in the Bahamas and turned the Bahamas into a transshipment point—almost singlehandedly corrupting an entire country. Lehder was the first to create a system for transporting and distributing large shipments of cocaine in the United States.

The cocaine traffickers knew each other, but they had not pooled their resources until 1981, when the leftist guerrilla group M-19 kidnapped Jorge Ochoa's sister, Marta Nieves. The heads of the families met to form a death squad, called Death To Kidnappers, which methodically killed the guerrillas and their families until Marta Nieves was released. The negotiations, which took place in Panama, were the traffickers' first collaboration with Panama's chief of military intelligence, a colonel named Manuel Antonio Noriega.

Although cocaine's dominant groups in Colombia, in Medellín and Cali, are often called cartels in the United States, they are not called cartels in Colombia. The Colombians use the word "mafia." In fact, they are not cartels, since they cannot control their product's price. The industry is not as monolithic as "cartel" implies. The Medellín and Cali groups together control probably less than two-thirds of the cocaine processed in Colombia. There are hundreds of mom-and-pop traffickers in Colombia, some of whom obtain their product by stealing it from the Escobars and the Ochoas, which is surely one of the world's riskier occupations. The largest groups in trafficking are not irreplaceable, and neither are the men who run them. When Jorge Ochoa fled to Spain after a crackdown in 1984, his younger brother Fabio ran the family business with no apparent difficulties.

The Colombian cocaine industry may not be a cartel, but it fulfills every other superlative people have used about it. It is the Third World's first truly successful

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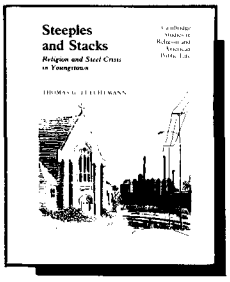

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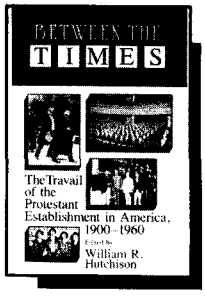

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multinational. It is the most profitable business in the world. Peasant growers in Bolivia, Peru, and, in smaller numbers, Colombia grow the coca leaf, which they sell to small labs that soak the leaves in kerosene to make coca base paste. The peasants are paid about one percent of the product's street value. Then the processors sell the base to the Colombians, who turn it into cocaine and crack in jungle laboratories. These installations vary in size from small garages to complexes that employ a hundred people and can be dismantled and moved overnight if there is word of an impending raid. The cocaine is usually formed into bricks and wrapped, marked with the organization's color or brand, and shipped or flown to the United States.

The Colombian traffickers have their own air fleet, their own marina, their own security force (which has more than a few coincidences with the Colombian National Police), and an army of maintenance crews, drivers, mechanics, lawyers (including four former Supreme Court justices), accountants, financiers, and insurance underwriters. And the traffickers have private armies of hired killers, or *sicarios*. In 1979 they set up the first schools for *sicarios*—literally schools with classrooms and chalkboards—to teach what has now become the classic Colombia kill: two 16-year-olds, a motorcycle, and a machine pistol.

The Colombia traffickers do at least $16 billion in business annually in the United States alone. Of that, between $2 billion and $4 billion a year comes back to Colombia, no more. Still, that is more than any single legal export. Coffee, Colombia's largest legal export, brought in $1.7 billion in foreign exchange in 1988, and that figure will plummet this year with a 40 percent fall in coffee prices. Colombia's economy is healthy by Latin American standards. It is growing steadily at more than five percent a year, with an inflation rate of about 20 percent a year, an eighth of the Latin American average. This is in part due to prudence in borrowing: Colombia's per capita external debt is one of the lowest in Latin America.

But it is also due to cocaine. Cocaine money does not create as much solid investment per dollar as does money from legal exports. But it doesn't hurt; and since the mid-1970s, every president of Colombia has done his utmost to ensure that the greatest percentage possible falls into the government treasury. Each new president starts his term with a tax amnesty, allowing Colombians to repatriate money held abroad with no questions asked. Barco offered 19 different kinds of amnesties when he became president in 1988.

There are many ways to launder money in Colombia, but the least subtle is the Ventanilla Siniestra, or left-handed window, of the Banco de la República, created during the marijuana boom in the 1970s. In Medellín last year I walked into the Banco de la República and waited in line for an hour as four very young men in tennis shoes and jeans took envelopes stuffed with $100 bills from their shirts and passed them to the teller. Nobody ran to call the police. The bank's rate of exchange is better than the street rate. The Medellín branch alone brings in somewhere between $400 million and $700 million a year.

As the government reaches out for drug money, so do its politicians. Campaigns are expensive in Colombia, and there are no burdensome government regulations about who finances them. Every recent president's campaign was heavily financed by drug money, and the congress is widely considered to rival the National Police as the most corrupt institution in the country. Two of the few politicians in recent years who probably did not have secret drug financing were Galán, who was killed for his support of the extradition treaty, and Escobar himself, who became an alternate congressman from Medellín in 1982.

In general, the closer an institution gets to the traffickers, the more corrupt it becomes. Cocaine's new income opportunities for judges have been well documented. Prosecutors are less corrupt, but it is a matter of logistics, not morals: it is simply easier to win cases by bribing judges, or the police. The most corrupt institutions are the ones directly responsible for fighting the traffickers. Policemen, the infantry in the war on drugs, are usually young men from slum neighborhoods with third-grade educations—exactly the profile of a drug dealer, and the line between the two tends to blur on the job. "A policeman is a human being who wants to live," I was told by an ex-cop in Medellín named Gitano. "They send you to arrest someone who is certainly very dangerous and certainly not alone. The mafiosos the police are fighting make two or three million pesos a month. A policeman gets 50,000 pesos a month—and that's if he's married. What would you do?" The Bogotá newsweekly *Semana* estimates that 80 percent of Medellín cops have links with the traffickers. Gitano had quit the force and was now working as a "private security guard," a common career move.

As Colombia's military enters the narcotics fight, one of the most visible consequences is a much more corrupt military. Escobar gave one of Medellín's army commanders a Mercedes as a going-away present. The relationship between military officials and traffickers goes beyond business: the two groups share an anti-leftish ideology. For the traffickers are now the country's largest landowners, too. They own about 12 percent of Colombia's productive land; and when they have to deal with left-wing peasant unions demanding land reform and better working conditions, they respond in their accustomed way. Death squads financed by the traffickers and backed by the military, sometimes with soldiers carrying out the murders, killed 3,000 people last year, mostly left-wing politicians, peasant organizers, and human rights workers.

Colombia's human rights record is dismal, one of the worst in Latin America. Last year the Colombian secret police turned up a school for *sicarios* run by the traffickers and the military that had more than 1,000 graduates. The same investigation produced an indictment—only an indictment, of course—of Pablo Escobar, trafficker Gonzalo (El Mexicano) Rodríguez Gacha, three army officers, a police lieutenant, and a mayor for two massacres of peasant union members in the banana-growing region of Urabá, in Antioquia's north. Rodríguez Gacha called a press conference to say that he considered himself one of the "colonels" in the fight against the guerrillas.

One of the death squads' principal targets is the Unión Patriótica party, a legal left-wing party associated with Colombia's largest and oldest guerrilla group, the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, or FARC. Running for office on the Unión Patriótica ticket is the equivalent of jumping out a 30-story window. Almost 1,000 party officials have been killed since the party's birth in 1985. The party's continued success in recruiting candidates is one of the great mysteries of Colombia. But several fronts of FARC have worked for the traffickers, too, guarding jungle laboratories. And the M-19, its war with the traffickers over Marta Ochoa's kidnapping apparently forgotten, attacked the Palace of Justice in November 1985, just as the Supreme Court was considering the legality of the extradition treaty. The assault was widely believed to have been financed by the traffickers. At least 95 people died in the resulting battle, among them 11 Supreme Court justices. The reconstituted Court, to no one's surprise, declared the treaty illegal.

While Colombia's bankers and lawyers denounce drug trafficking in sonorous tones, many in those professions profit either directly or indirectly from cocaine

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money. Even the Catholic Church has proved itself a tower of moral ambiguity. Several priests participated enthusiastically in Escobar's campaign for congress. "Escobar thought about Colombia," Father Elias Lópera Cárdenas, a theologian in the Archdiocese of Medellín, told me. "He talked about ending poverty. When I knew him, he was a good person and had good ideas. The press talks about atrocities. But if he's bad the state should prove it. It's not up to me." The Church as an institution has accepted large donations from traffickers.

"The business interests of the drug traffickers have not been uncovered, because if they were, the whole world would collapse," Juan Gómez Martínez, Medellín's mayor, told the *Washington Post*. Cocaine money has transformed Colombia. It is most obvious in the high-rise luxury buildings—some with private pools for balconies—in the El Poblado area of Medellín, in the district's Mercedes dealerships, art galleries, Italian clothing boutiques, and Persian rug shops. One trafficker built his girlfriend a private velodrome with a constantly self-adjusting ceiling to compensate for excess sun or clouds.

The traffickers do not own everything in Colombia, but they own everything they want to own. Colombia's factories do not attract them; factories are long-term investments and a poor way to launder dollars. The money has gone into farms, luxury goods, and glamour businesses that are largely outside government regulation, such as soccer teams, hotels, discos, contraband cigarettes, and fighting bulls. The shopping centers of Medellín and Cali are filled with leather goods or dress boutiques run by traffickers' wives or girlfriends. A boutique is a traditional birthday gift.

"I had no friends who didn't mix with the traffickers," said Clarita Medina, whose older brother, Alvaro, was a Superior Court justice killed after he indicted Escobar. Clarita is a student at a private girls' college. "The traffickers take you to the best restaurants, give you nice clothes and jewelry. Now I never accept. I won't even set foot in the shopping centers they own." She said she has stopped talking to several friends who married traffickers. Clarita's rejection of the traffickers has become a problem. "I react too strongly," she said. "When I see someone in white shoes wearing a lot of gold jewelry, I get a feeling of revulsion." She was seeing a psychologist to cure her of these abnormal feelings.

Leaving aside the question of just who needs treatment here, it is true that Clarita is not "normal" in Colombia. "If the traffickers are not accepted in society, it's because they are from lumpen families," a Bogotá financier told me. "But if you have good taste, no one cares where you made your money. Soon we'll have a generation of kids of mafia families with good table manners and degrees from foreign universities. Joseph Kennedy made his money in organized crime during Prohibition. His son was President of the United States."

"The good families in Colombia used to have a priest and a doctor," said Luz Estela de Medina, Alvaro Medina's widow. "Now they also have a mafioso. He's usually the best-loved son because he gives the family so many things. Mama wants to enjoy life, the brothers and sisters like riding in a new car. It may seem obvious why someone who just started a new job would have a car, but they don't want to know."

Colombia's traditional oligarchy has grudgingly accepted the traffickers. To the poor, however, the traffickers are heroes. Until cocaine, the way to get rich in Colombia was to be born rich. Now cocaine is making millionaires of the poor. In contrast to the traditional Third World agricultural commodities, which are primary materials that enrich a few upper-class families while paying workers very low wages, cocaine is a highly value-added product inside Colombia. It is a monopoly product, and demand is not elastic. A job in the cocaine industry pays many times the wages of a similar job in the legal sector. According to Ethan Nadlemann of Princeton University, every cocaine exporter provides work for 740 coca farmers (most outside of the country), 250 coca paste processors, 25 people who transport paste, and four or five refiners. There are also jobs working directly for the major traffickers, in fields ranging from security (there are now more private security guards in Colombia than in the 75,000-member National Police) to caring for the tigers in Escobar's 1,500-animal zoo. The current estimate is that 500,000 Colombians work directly in cocaine.

Unlike the traditional sectors of Colombian society, cocaine offers a smart slum kid the chance for advancement. A successful "mule," or drug-runner, can hire a mule of his own and soon become an independent trafficker, or a lieutenant in an important organization, rising to a position of respect and power in his neighborhood and beyond. The people who now live in El Poblado's high rises were living in the slums ten years ago. They still retain the culture of their youth; they visit the shrines of their saints, listen to ranchero music, and decorate their apartments with sculptures of

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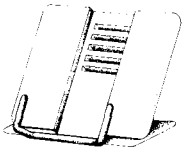

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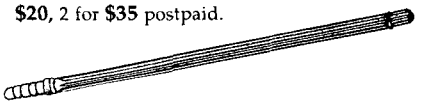

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nude women with light bulbs for breasts. Their rustic taste keeps them out of the country club, but it also allows the poor to view their lifestyle as within reach.

Escobar himself was attracted to congress by the legal immunity legislators enjoy, I was told by Orion Alvarez, one of his idea men. But to Medellín's poor, Escobar was the ideal politician: the patron, the rich man who would take care of them by writing personal checks. Few in Medellín had not heard how Escobar installed lights for night play in the soccer fields in poor neighborhoods, sometimes playing in the kickoff game himself. He built a beautiful neighborhood of cottages, which goes by the name of Barrio Pablo Escobar, for 2,000 poor people who lived in Medellín's garbage dumps. His civic spirit probably cost him a few million dollars, but on such pocket change Escobar achieved a reputation bordering on popular sainthood in Medellín. The young boys I met in the slums all wanted to work for him, driving buses, flying planes, managing labs. Gitano, the ex-cop, told of a game poor children play: they compare toys and clothes, and whoever has the nicest things is dubbed "Pablo Escobar."

Envigado, where Escobar grew up, now has the highest per capita income of any city in Latin America. In the neighborhood of La Paz, once a slum, neat stone-front houses and new cars line the streets. It is Escobar's recruiting grounds, said a woman who showed another reporter and me around. Penny (she did not want her real name used) said that the neighborhood had a system of tunnels to allow traffickers to hide or escape from the police. She had made more money, she said, as a mule, carrying coke in her purse on one half-hour flight from Medellín to Cali, than she made in a year as a factory supervisor.

Penny's former boyfriend, Gilberto, made his living selling coke that had been stolen from Escobar and the Ochoas. One night *sicarios* put nine bullets in him. He lived, but at the hospital he was shot 36 times more. Penny was with him when he died. "Perhaps you've heard of him," she said proudly. She still hung out with traffickers and spent her vacation flying with drug pilots, but she quit working as a mule because her brother became addicted to *bazuco*, a crack-like cigarette made from low-grade coca paste that costs 50 cents. Her brother came to live with her and stole everything she owned, down to the towels, before she kicked him out. She did not know if he was alive or dead.

When Colombians talk about the problems that cocaine, or *bazuco*, has brought to their country, they talk about drug addiction with the same rage and despair people in the United States feel. About half a million people are addicted to cocaine in Colombia, a country of 30 million; that is about equal to the rate of crack and cocaine addiction in the United States. They are mostly from poor families, but wealthier families also suffer drug addiction, and there are few treatment programs. Drug addiction is a terrible problem for Colombia. But the country is full of terrible problems, some of which are much more pervasive than drug addiction: hunger, children dying of diarrhea, people living in garbage dumps. Worrying about drug use is a luxury Colombia cannot yet enjoy, and drug addiction has not become the obsession in Colombian society that it is in American society.

If one overwhelming problem stands out among Colombia's sea of troubles, it is murder. Colombia has long been a lawless place, a violent society where state institutions, especially the justice system, are generally ignored. It never took much in the past to spark violence; in 1948 the assassination of a populist political leader set off a dispute between the two major political parties that killed 200,000 to 300,000 people over the next five years. In addition to corruption and drug addiction, cocaine has brought back Colombia's violence, producing an almost complete collapse in the rule of law.

Today Colombia is the most violent country in the world not involved in an international war. In Medellín, the single leading cause of death for people of all ages is multiple gunshot wounds. The city's Metropolitan Health Department's report for 1986—a document that in other places would be concerned with heart disease, tuberculosis, or infant diarrhea—begins with a quotation from Hector Abad Gómez, who was the president of Medellín's Human Rights Commission back when such an organization existed: "Why in this moment here and in so many other corners of the earth are the living things most dangerous to man not viruses, not microbes, nor parasites, but human beings?" Abad Gómez's words acquired a more personal overtone when he was murdered a year later, shot in the street by two human beings while on his way to the funeral of another Human Rights Commission member.

Since 1986 the murder rate has increased 50 percent each year. Twenty murders a day in Medellín is now commonplace, a rate about ten times that of Detroit. I found myself in a bar one night with an agreeable Medellín couple who owned an art gallery. The topic turned from Colombian art to Colombian violence, specifically how foreign journalists had invented Medellín violence because it was a good story. I mentioned that a man was shot in front of my hotel one evening by two *sicarios*, something I'd never seen before. The woman leaned forward in her chair. "But that's nothing," she said. "That happens all the time. I've seen that four or five times myself." There are about 140 different death squads in Colombia. It is caught in a vicious circle of crime and breakdown, where each crime further strains the justice system and robs it of legitimacy, thus encouraging more crime that the system cannot handle. A sentence is handed down for one in a thousand crimes in Colombia.

Cocaine is responsible on several fronts. Many of the death squads are collaborations between drug traffickers and the military. And the traffickers invented the *sicario*, which has driven the price of murder in Medellín down to where, after a little shopping around, people can settle property disputes with their neighbors or get rid of romantic rivals for ten or 15 dollars. Much of the violence is drug-related: the turf battles between traffickers that take so many slum lives, the assassinations of public figures who threaten the traffickers. The list is familiar by now: 50 judges, 170 other judicial employees, dozens of journalists, a justice minister, a Narcotics Police chief, an attorney general, a major newspaper publisher, Galán. Early this month the justice system went on strike, demanding better protection after an especially bloody week: a magistrate, a congressman, a leftist political leader, and six policemen were killed, and an anchorman and a TV reporter were wounded. They are the murders that get the publicity, that provoke public repudiation of the traffickers and government crackdowns.

But public repudiation of the traffickers is being accompanied by something new in Colombia: resignation. After the assassination of Galán, who was as beloved a symbol of hope in Colombia as Robert Kennedy was in the United States, Barco cracked down, reviving the extradition treaty without waiting for congress or the Supreme Court. The traffickers have responded with assassinations and bombs, not just bombing newspapers and political party headquarters, but also schools, restaurants, and shopping centers, where they could hurt ordinary Colombians. The bombs have killed only a few people, but that has been by design, not by incompetence; they are only a warning that the

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police are powerless to stop the traffickers. The warning is enough. People are scared. Newspaper reports from Colombia say that many people feel that the government is obviously not equipped to wage war on the drug traffickers; and they also feel that if it was not so equipped, it should not have provoked their wrath.

The wave of bombings is helping to reinforce one of the traffickers' old themes: it is not drug trafficking that causes violence, it is the repression of drug trafficking. This, of course, is "blame the victim" in the extreme, but it has a certain logic. If no one were trying to prosecute the traffickers, they would not be killing judges, cops, and journalists, and bombs would not be blowing up on innocent bystanders. Even last year, before the crackdown began, most Colombians I met felt that the way to end the violence was to let up on the traffickers and to treat cocaine as marijuana is treated in the United States. Polls consistently showed Colombians opposing extradition. The crackdown boosted support for extradition temporarily, but it is diminishing as Colombians weary of the violence of the traffickers' response. Even an aide to Galán now calls for dialogue with the traffickers. "The price is becoming too high," said Hernán Meléndez. "If the stability of the country requires dialogue with the narcotics traffickers, we should do it."

Of all the remaining candidates, Ernesto Samper has the fewest ties to the traffickers; and he proposes an "international solution" to the drug problem. "Let's not turn Colombia into the Vietnam of the war on drugs" is a standard applause line of his campaign speech. The U.S. plan is "educational videos in the United States, bombers for Colombia," he said at a press conference. "Persuasive chats in the consumption centers and helicopters for Colombia." Samper's comments underscore a growing resentment that Colombia is being called on to solve what Colombians see as a gringo problem.

Over and over in Colombia, I heard people express anger at the United States for making Colombia destroy its own institutions when they don't see the United States taking serious steps at home. Slum-dwellers loved to tell me about how the gringos made Colombia eradicate its marijuana crop, only to make it one of their own most important crops at home. They see the United States as equally unwilling to act against cocaine: unwilling to restrict the sale of the guns, unwilling to crack down on money launderers, unwilling even to restrict the sale of processing chemicals,

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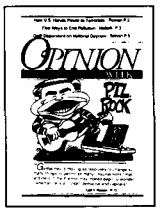

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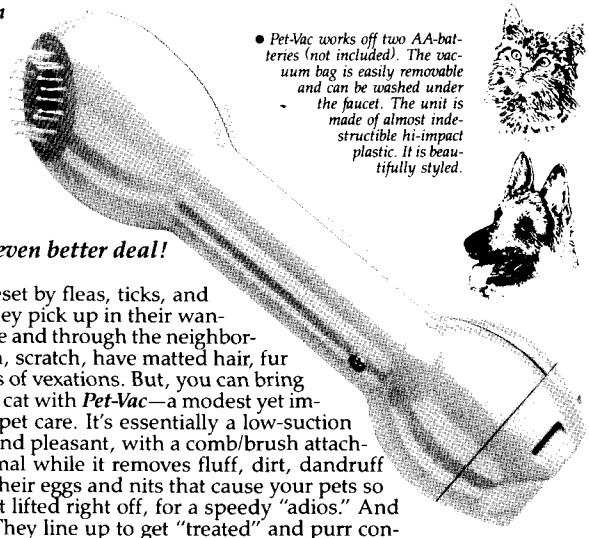

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95 percent of which are made in the United States.

"The United States' problem with drugs," said Luz Estela de Medina, the judge's widow, "is not the pain it causes, but the dollars that are leaving the country as a result. You don't really care about drug addiction. It's public, it's tolerated. You just don't want Indians like us to get the money." Luz Estela vastly underestimates the American hysteria about drugs, but I would guess that most Colombians agree. She is a political conservative. She can hardly be considered soft on cocaine.

From a Colombian perspective, Colombia has not corrupted the United States. The United States has corrupted Colombia. And the Colombians don't hear any thanks for the tremendous cost of their sacrifices. Instead, they hear "We should bomb whatever it's called—Medellín," from Ed Koch, and "step in here, please" from the customs agent at Miami International. The more American politicians attack Colombia, the more anti-American sentiment in Colombia grows, with ominous implications for Colombia's further willingness to fight the traffickers.

The amazing thing about fighting cocaine in Colombia is not that it hasn't worked, but that it takes place at all. Colombians fight cocaine partly because openly defying the United States would carry high political costs, and partly because many people still consider the traffickers to be bad people and are ashamed that their country is identified with drugs. In short, because they still have values. But as the traffickers raise the costs of such a battle, which they can do indefinitely, fewer and fewer Colombians will be willing to become martyrs for a cause they see as not their own.

The United States is not trying to fight a band of criminals who are outlaws in Colombian society. It is trying to wage a war against a large part of Colombian society. Colombia is as addicted to cocaine as the United States, and stopping the supply coming from Colombia is no easier than stopping demand in the United States. There are many, many people in Colombia who are not ready, for reasons of nationalism, economic self-interest, or physical self-preservation, to fight cocaine. The more the United States tries to force Colombia to fight, the stronger resistance will become. And the more the United States tries to force Colombia to turn its already crippled political institutions against an organization that is stronger than the government, the weaker those institutions will become.

Calls for an American military solution, then, are counterproductive as well as ineffective. Colombia will never ask the United States to send troops, and any troop landing or bombing raid would be viewed as an invasion: it would be the fastest way to make the traffickers into national heroes. An American decision to bomb or to send troops would carry enormous implications. If the traffickers strike back, killing American soldiers, the United States will have to choose between slinking away and war. We would quickly find ourselves in a Vietnam on our doorstep, where the enemy has amply proved its ability to bring the battle to our streets—indeed, that ability is precisely what we would be fighting about. If the United States declares real war on the traffickers, moreover, it had better be prepared for the consequences. If a bomb blows up Washington's St. Albans school, or Dadeland Mall on a Saturday afternoon, will the American public react any differently than the Colombian public?

And what exactly would the United States do in Colombia? There is no particular reason to think that American soldiers would do a better job of fighting the traffickers than Colombians. We know little about jungle warfare. Our soldiers are just as susceptible to drug addiction as Colombians. To bomb labs, we would have to find them—a lot of them, no easy task in a country of mountains and jungle larger than Texas, New Mexico, and Louisiana combined—and we would have to reach them before the traffickers received the tip that enabled them to airlift out the cocaine and the chemicals. Capturing major traffickers would require precise information, convincing infiltration, and lots of cash; there are few organizations singularly less suited for such tasks than the American military. Bomb Medellín? What would we bomb? The El Poblado luxury high rises? The skyscrapers that contain the banks? The slums? Koch's suggestion that the United States bomb Medellín is the equivalent of Bogotá's mayor suggesting that Colombia bomb Chicago to get rid of drug users. And it would do about as much to solve the problem.

Although American policy has not yet been tailored to the most extreme demagoguery of its politicians, it relies increasingly on a military solution in Colombia. After Galán's assassination, President Bush ordered $65 million in military aid to Colombia. His drug plan proposes $261 million in aid to Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, an estimated $90 million of it going to Colombia, almost all of it in military and police aid. Whether or not the military is part of the solution in Colombia, moreover, it is certainly part of the problem. At the same time as the anti-drug fight is weakening Colombia's civilian institutions, American aid strengthens the military, an organization that already enjoys far too much power and impunity in Colombian society, and helps make one of the most brutal militaries in the hemisphere more brutal still.

To many Colombian military officials, the traffickers are a partner in the fight against their real enemy: the guerrillas. Trafficker Rodríguez Gacha's announcement that he considers himself one of the "colonels" in the war on the guerrillas works both ways; some of Colombia's real colonels have returned the favor, working for the traffickers while receiving equipment and training from the United States. The former head of the National Police was recently dismissed amid reports that he was on the traffickers' payroll. If the United States chose to supply weapons to the traffickers, there would be no better way than through the Colombian military.

But let's assume, even so, that the strategy of law enforcement can somehow be made to work in Colombia. Let's say that the police and the military break

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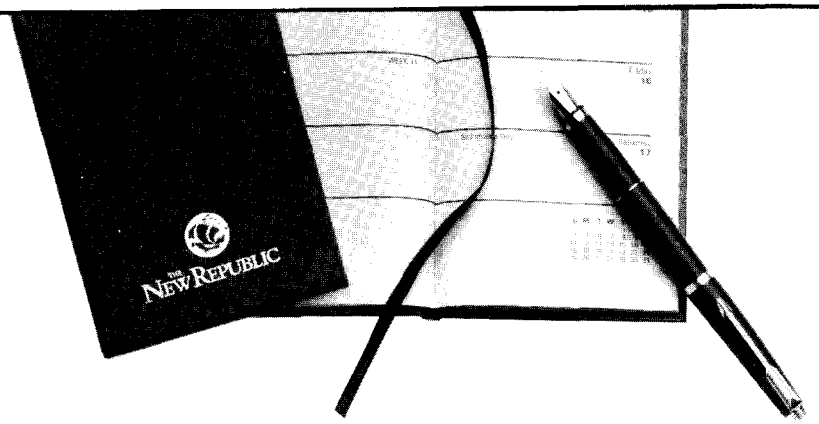
all records for dismantling laboratories and seizing cocaine. Let's assume that they capture major traffickers, and that these arrests cripple the drug organizations. Let's assume that the traffickers lose their nerve and start to close down operations. The fulfillment of this fantasy would still have little effect on the drug problem in the United States.

The first reason is that supply vastly outstrips demand, given that Colombia produces about seven times the cocaine that the American market can presently absorb. Almost all of it would have to be eliminated to affect the price or the supply at home. The second reason is that cocaine's price is largely a function of its transportation and distribution costs; the greatest part of its value is added once it leaves Colombia. Even if we succeeded in doubling the costs of producing cocaine in Colombia, it would not much affect the street price in the United States.

This means that anything less than almost total eradication of cocaine in Colombia will have practically no impact on price or supply inside the United States. Partial success would be like jumping halfway over a fence. Considering that up to now our efforts have not even been able to hold back the increase in supply, a policy that depends on our ability to wipe out practically all the cocaine Colombia produces is hardly likely to succeed.

The strategy of law enforcement is fraught with paradox. If we succeed in raising the price, cocaine will simply become a more attractive commodity for producers. They will produce more, increasing the supply and lowering the price once again. If we succeed in making Colombia a completely hostile environment for traffickers, they will move elsewhere. Colombia's main contribution to the drug trade—processing and marketing—is highly mobile. The traffickers have already begun to operate in Brazil, a country whose northern jungles are as removed from the reach of law enforcement as the dark side of the moon.

The simplest first step, therefore, is for the United States to do more at home. Bogotá cannot be expected to keep cracking down on traffickers while Washington refuses to do anything about their weapons and chemicals and American banks that launder the traffickers' money. The United States is Colombia's largest trading partner, and an international voice of importance regarding Colombia's legal exports, but its actions during the past few years seem designed to drive Colombia into cocaine's waiting embrace. American objections to an international coffee agree-



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ment between 74 nations led to a walkout at a July meeting that ended in the agreement's suspension. Over the next two months coffee prices went into a free-fall, dropping from $1.45 a pound to 85 cents a pound. Colombia is now exporting coffee at a loss.

And even while the U.S. Agency for International Development encourages Colombia to export flowers, its fourth-largest legal export, Colombia's flower industry has been hurt by lawsuits from California flower growers and U.S. Commerce Department measures designed to protect the domestic flower industry. If the United States is genuinely interested in lessening Bogotá's dependence on cocaine, it must stop sabotaging Colombia's legal industries.

The United States must also encourage coca-leaf growers to grow something else. We spend on crop substitution and development assistance less than a twentieth of what we spend on crop eradication and law enforcement. Michael Massing, reporting for the *New York Review of Books*, asked the head of the narcotics police in San Jose de Guaviare, a coca-growing region of Colombia, if he would rather have helicopters to find coca fields to burn or credits to help local farmers switch to food crops. The lieutenant chose the credits without hesitation.

Ironically, the failure to drive up the price of cocaine offers an opportunity for crop substitution; farmers received one-fifth as much for their coca leaf in 1988 as they did in 1986. A massive program—several billion dollars—to build roads, provide credits, seeds, equipment, and fertilizers to develop legal agriculture could offer farmers an economically viable alternative to coca. This is even more important in Peru and Bolivia, which are much poorer than Colombia and much more dependent on cocaine. In Peru, coca leaf is by far the largest foreign exchange earner; in Bolivia, it equals all other exports combined. At least a quarter of all Bolivian workers earn their living from cocaine.

Colombia has not yet become, like Bolivia, a single-commodity economy. But cocaine grips Colombia tightly enough to make the traffickers impervious to law enforcement. The tinkering done on President Bush's drug plan was entirely beside the point; a strategy that depends on law enforcement is destined to fail. Just as in our own cities, a combination of law enforcement, treatment, and development offers the best possibility for solving the cocaine problem in Colombia.

Still, it is entirely possible that this will not solve it. It is hard to look at Colombia without a sense of profound pessimism. It is often said that the handful of uncorrupted judges, journalists, policemen, and politicians in Colombia, the Colombians who maintain their idealism against all good sense, offer grounds for hope. These people are worthy of admiration. But their lives—and their deaths—are not a measure of their country's progress in wrestling with drugs. Progress will come when resistance to cocaine is a rational act for the many, not an irrational act for the few. Colombia's martyrdom is merely poetry: heartening news about the resources of the human spirit, but of little value in the mundane struggle against cocaine. •

Adventures in Babysitting

BY BARBARA EHRENREICH

My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan by Nancy Reagan with William Novak

(Random House, 384 pp., $21.95)

When her husband was Governor of California, Nancy Reagan got into the habit of taking long baths, during which she would hold "imaginary conversations" with anyone who had ventured to say a mean thing about her or "Ronnie." These one-sided conversations, presumably staged out loud, must have been deeply satisfying. As Mrs. Reagan tells us, in a humorous tone, "with nobody to answer back, I always came out the winner."

My Turn is the distilled bathwater of Mrs. Reagan's life. It is for the most part sweetish, with a tart edge of rebuke, but disappointingly free of dirt or particulate matter of any kind. We learn, for example, that the Reagans eat eggs only once a week, that Gorbachev had never had a soufflé until Mrs. Reagan served him one, that Ronnie once taught his daughter Maureen to sing "La Marseillaise," that the Johnsons' china set, which has state flowers on the edge, was "more suitable for a luncheon than a formal state dinner."

But of that great mystery of the 1980s—When did President Reagan's mind unwrap, and who or what filled in for it?—we learn nothing, except that Ronnie is often "remote" and, of course, hard of hearing. Even on that secondary mystery of our time—How did the White House scheduling come to be entrusted to a San Francisco astrologer (who, it should be noted, neglected to warn us of an earthquake)?—we learn nothing new, except that Mrs. Reagan now regards her superstition as a "habit." This is the Betty Ford defense, and it comes as a mild surprise from the world's foremost advocate of saying "no."

Most of the milestones of the Reagan years go unnoted here, or appear only as backdrops to some larger crisis of interior decoration. We hear nothing, for example, of the recession of 1982 and 1983, of the savage cutbacks in social spending, of the wars in Central America, of the bombing of the Marines in Beirut, of the raid on Tripoli. Grenada is favored with a mention, but only because Ronnie announced the "rescue operation" to Congressional leaders in the Yellow Oval Room:

> When we first moved in I found it cold . . . but over time, and with the addition of two sofas from storage, two or three coffee tables, porcelain figures, and other *objets*, the room seemed more inviting and became a favorite of mine.

No, the purpose of *My Turn* is not to inform or to amuse, not even to absolve Mrs. Reagan of her reputation as a senescent bimbo with a lust for home furnishings. Instead, we are invited to appreciate how much she has suffered from hundreds of insults and slights, illnesses and assaults, over her years in public life. A few episodes of joy are recorded—inaugurations, an evening on a yacht with Queen Elizabeth II—but it is the pain that is meant to surprise and enlist us. The purpose is to make us pity her. And in this weary enterprise she teaches by example.

She tells us at the outset that her eight years in the White House were "the most difficult years of my life." Her mother died; she underwent a mastectomy; Ronnie developed a cancerous polyp; Ronnie was shot—this last creating for Mrs. Reagan a trauma of equal magnitude: "His was mainly to the body; mine was to my spirit." These genuine trials are so magnified by the cruelty of the press and traitorous others—Don Regan, for ex-

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ample, or her daughter Patti Davis—that at times we seem to be inching our way through a vale of tears. There must have been moments of surcease with Jerry Zipkin, Betsy Bloomingdale, and the rest of Mrs. Reagan's airhead crowd, but none of these is recorded.

In the spirit of the bathtub soliloquies, the reader is forced to review numerous instances of calumny and disrespect. Each of these follows the same pattern, until a certain numbing rhythm sets in. First there is a statement of Mrs. Reagan's good and utterly reasonable intentions. The Governor's mansion in Sacramento had to be replaced with a brand new mansion because the old one was a fire hazard, and unsafe for little Ron. The White House, which could not be replaced, had to be expensively renovated because it was "shabby," plus "we actually found half-eaten sandwiches and empty beer cans in some of the drawers." And so on.

Next there is a summary of the vicious things said about the utterly reasonable effort, often with offending quotes masochistically reproduced. At this point Mrs. Reagan is sustained by Claire Boothe Luce's comment "no good deed goes unrewarded," though other aphorisms, involving overly hot kitchens, spring immediately to mind. Certainly there is nothing in this book, or in other accounts of Mrs. Reagan's career, to suggest that she was dragged, limp and resisting, from Santa Barbara to Sacramento, and from Sacramento to Washington.

NANCY REAGAN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Finally there is the vindication, in which other voices are called upon to defend Mrs. Reagan's efforts, or at least her intentions. Often these turn out to be the voices of Democrats, who serve no other role in *My Turn* except to round out the ritual of Ronnie's elections. Thus Tip O'Neill is cited enthusing over the White House renovation. Barbara Mikulski is recruited to endorse Mrs. Reagan's campaign against Regan. Margaret Truman weighs in on the side of the new china. My guess is that in Mrs Reagan's world Democrats can serve as disinterested authorities simply because they are so peripheral to the crucial intrigues, not to mention frumpily dressed. Or perhaps she has simply intuited—post-Iranamok, post-HUD, post-Meese, post-Deaver, etc.—that credibility increases as one travels outward from the centers of Republican power.

But it is hard, even for a reader who has psyched herself into a mood of bipartisan sisterhood, to feel the sympathy that Mrs. Reagan so obviously craves, in part because she herself has so little to offer. Envy, for example, is a major theme in *My Turn*, either attributed to others or expressed by Mrs. Reagan. She hypothesizes that some of the press's unkindness derives from female envy of her figure: "Some women aren't all that crazy about a woman who wears a size four." She suggests that Barry Goldwater refused to endorse Ronnie's Presidential bid in 1976 only because he came "to resent Ronnie's leadership of the conservative movement." She herself was jealous of the superior skybox Betty Ford was assigned at the '76 convention: "Maureen [Reagan] was convinced that this was done deliberately, to give the Fords an advantage." And when she observes that "although the White House is a state home, its scale is nothing like that of Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle," I begin to see how lightly we have gotten off in the matter of renovations.

Mrs. Reagan's pique is least becoming when directed within her family, at the errant daughter Patti. It might be thought that young Ron, with his ballet career and *Playboy* assignments, would be a dubious asset with the fundamentalist crowd, but he comes off as an ideal son. Patti, however, can do nothing right. She became a radical in the 1960s; she wrote an autobiographical novel in which Mrs. Reagan was portrayed as a cold and distracted mother; she was insufficiently nurturing after the mastectomy; she was even, it is revealed here, a bad baby:

> When we put her down at night, she would scream for hours—at least it *seemed* like hours. . . . There were also problems with eating. Sometimes after she had been fed she would lean over in her high chair and throw up. That was *lots* of fun, as you can imagine.

Except for a newly revealed capacity for self-pity, the picture that emerges in *My Turn* is not too different from the many unflattering portraits we have already seen: of a vain woman, forever checking out the female competition (Betty Ford, Geraldine Ferraro, Raisa Gorbachev), addicted to *objets*, and, of course, ferociously protective of her affable, out-to-lunch husband. Early in the book she asserts that she does have "interests," but one waits in vain to find out what they are. Her best-advertised interest, the anti-drug campaign, appears as from the clear-blue sky, inspired by no moment of reflection or alarm. We are told only that it "stemmed from the values that Mother had embodied," but even this stunningly redundant explanation is lifted from someone else (Mrs. Reagan's friend Mike Wallace).

So it is easy to forget, in the shallows of *My Turn*, that Mrs. Reagan has already *had* her turn, that she is not just your everyday aggrieved executive wife, struggling to keep up with her husband's career moves, "nesting" (to use one of her favorite words) in a series of barely habitable dwellings. As Ronnie slipped into personal reverie or the prodromal

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phase of Alzheimer's, she was making her stealthy advance on the Presidency. She drove out the hateful Regan; she filled in for the cue cards that otherwise prefigured all Presidential utterances. Recall her famous stage whisper to a drifting Ronnie, when a question was raised about arms control: "We're doing everything we can." Not "*tell them* we're doing everything . . . ," just the line itself, suggesting that an element of ventriloquism had entered into this fond relationship.

Behind the dizzying camouflage of borrowed gowns and extorted china, Mrs. Reagan carried on brilliantly. To be sure, she was hobbled by her inability to attend Cabinet meetings and the fractiousness of various employees, but the fact that Ronnie was not impeached—or more mercifully disqualified on medical grounds—attests to her remarkable performance as a substitute President. On the more positive side, it was she who converted Ronnie from his boyish "evil empire" views, she who nudged him into meeting with Gorbachev, and she (it is revealed here) who thought to seat the two men in front of a cozy fire.

My Turn also reveals in detail, and perhaps for the first time, the tremendous suffering Mrs. Reagan endured for the cause of world peace. Not on account of Gorbachev, who comes off here as a cream puff, but in the hands of the formidable Raisa, who is presented as a rude, erratically dressed pedant of fluctuating hair color ("it became less red over the years"). Raisa's sins included neglecting to offer condolences for the mastectomy or for the death of Mrs. Reagan's mother, which is inexcusable, since "the Soviets know everything." Almost as bad, she was prone to giving boring "lectures" on the Soviet Union. Fortunately there were other witnesses to this appalling behavior, so that Mrs. Reagan can say, in the general spirit of the book, "I was glad that other people could see what I had been going through."

Why she was willing to pay such a high price for peace we may never know. Certainly she was no more of a pacifist than the man whom even Goldwater rejected, in 1976, as too dangerously reactionary. Maybe she divined, in her Bloomingdale-Lauren circle of friends, that Ronnie's flamboyant Armageddon talk was a little déclassé. Or maybe, in some bathtub session, she settled on peace as the perfect retort to all those critics, including Patti, who thought of Ronnie as a "warmonger."

But she did it. And, having done it, it's too bad she can't give herself more credit. Mrs. Reagan, however, is very much a pre-feminist (even the issue of her age is, once again, coyly skirted); and old-fashioned gals exert power only through male vehicles. Nothing hurt her more, in all the years of hurts, than Regan's charge that she was a "dragon lady," and William Safire's echo that she was "power hungry." *My Turn*, with all its whining, stands as one long rebuttal to such nasty charges: proof that underneath the Marie Antoinette packaging was someone who never even quite made it as a mother, just a tearful, vulnerable, little girl. Her book may represent the Reagans' last campaign: an effort to prove that Ronnie really *was* President after all.

Since it's my turn for a moment, I would suggest that Mrs. Reagan wipe that unbecoming pout off her face, forget the barbs of the ignorant and the envious, and try to look back on her reign with quiet pride. She did good. Maybe she even saved the world. And since I said it, and I'm a Democrat—worse, a leftist—it must be true.

BARBARA EHRENREICH's most recent book is *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (Pantheon).

Questions of Travel

BY CHRISTOPHER BENFEY

Becoming a Poet: Elizabeth Bishop with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell
by David Kalstone
edited by Robert Hemenway

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 299 pp., $22.50)

The men of the middle generation of American poets—Randall Jarrell, John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Delmore Schwartz—have sometimes seemed in recent years to blur into a single composite figure. Born around the time of one world war and publishing their first books just after a second, they seem more mired in their time than their modernist predecessors. But as their poetry has lost readers and influence, their oddly similar lives—the "generic one," as Lowell ruefully called it—have proved particularly suited to the loose and baggy patterns of current biography, our ambiguous tribute to literary significance. To some extent this fate may have pleased them, for the infidelities and alcoholism and crackups and suicides of this tenured generation, the first to hole up in academia, seem in retrospect to have been attempts to have a life at all to "confess" to, something to weigh in the balance with term papers, promotions, and office hours.

Elizabeth Bishop has so far escaped the biographers, just as she avoided, until the last years of her life, the fate of poet-in-residence. And while her life was not devoid of disasters—"The art of losing," she famously wrote, "isn't hard to master"—she has emerged, since her death in 1978, as the poet of her doomed generation who is most read, even while her life is the least known. Indeed, Bishop is in danger now of being muffled by praise, having entered that ambiguous country reserved for certain women artists in our culture (Georgia O'Keeffe for example, and certainly Emily Dickinson) where, exempt from blame, they are also deprived of the highest praise.

In an atmosphere so anodyne, it's bracing to read, in a new and eagerly awaited book by the late David Kalstone, words about Bishop's poems more incisive and unafraid than we're used to. Not Kalstone's words, however—he's as reverent as the rest—but those of two other poets who served as Bishop's mentors: the older Marianne Moore and the slightly younger Robert Lowell. That Bishop mostly ignored their advice shows that "courage of treatment" Emerson admired in Whitman, but her refusals are part of a larger and still unfinished story in American poetry. Through her correspondence with Moore and Lowell, expertly glossed by Kalstone, we can trace the replacement of one aesthetic, modernism, with another that one might call postmodern.

The devastating record of Bishop's losses has impressed Kalstone as it has other commentators. Her father died when she was eight months old, and her mother, distraught at his death, suffered a series of breakdowns; she was hospitalized during most of the first five years of

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her daughter's life. Brought up by her impoverished maternal relatives, whom she adored, on the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia, and by her wealthy but alienating paternal relatives in Worcester, Massachusetts, Bishop spent the rest of her life trying to re-establish, in Key West and then in Brazil, some semblance of the vanished maternal world of the small, preindustrial village she hadn't known since childhood. Late in life the losses kept coming, with the suicide of one lover—her Brazilian companion Lota de Macedo Soares—and the breakdown of another. Bishop once called herself, apparently without irony, "the loneliest person who ever lived."

Meanwhile the village reappeared in her work, in her wonderful story "In the Village," and in the loving descriptions of her late, Wordsworthian poems of recollection—the fog, for example, "shifting, salty, thin," as it closes in on the town:

> Its cold, round crystals
> form and slide and settle
> in the white hens' feathers,
> in gray glazed cabbages,
> on the cabbage roses
> and lupins like apostles;
>
> the sweet peas cling
> to their wet white string
> on the whitewashed fences;
> bumblebees creep
> inside the foxgloves,
> and evening commences.
> ("The Moose")

The fog transfigures the gray cabbages and other homely details of an impoverished landscape. An undertheme of dependency—the crystals sliding among the hens' protective feathers; the clinging peas; the bees creeping into the foxgloves—suggests a place of maternal security, presaging the apparition of the comforting female moose—"homely as a house / (or, safe as houses)"—later in the poem.

Much in Bishop's past had prepared her for a mentor both masterful and maternal. At the close of her memoir about Marianne Moore, she casually mused:

> I have a sort of subliminal glimpse of the capital letter *M* multiplying. I am turning the pages of an illuminated manuscript and seeing that initial letter again and again: Marianne's monogram; mother; manners; morals; and I catch myself murmuring, "Manners and morals; manners *as* morals? Or is it morals *as* manners?"

The first two entries, the mother and the monogram, are perhaps too transparent for comment; as Kalstone remarks, "Moore's world was in part a vanished sustaining maternal world transposed into another key; it nourished Bishop's writing life, yet could be contradicted with impunity."

Bishop was a precocious senior at Vassar when she first met Moore in the spring of 1934, on a bench outside the New York Public Library. Bishop thought that the 47-year-old Moore, with her pointed face and "delicately pugnacious-looking jaw," resembled Mickey Rooney, while Moore was pleased with Bishop's "flicker of impudence." An air of late-Victorian eccentricity pervades their first exchanges; they made a date to attend the circus, and Bishop promised to send Moore an "excellent" new book on tattooing.

Though Moore vigorously denied any indebtedness—"I roam about in carnivorous protest at the very thought of unimaginative analyses"—much of Bishop's reliance on a primarily descriptive poetry was underwritten by Moore. Kalstone locates the roots of Bishop's hunger for description in her early experience of the fragility of her material surroundings:

> We are accustomed to thinking of Bishop's lively clarity, her openness to the world . . . and forgetting that these blithe strengths were the product of tensions and fears. Her commitment to the *illusion* of physical presence—her hallmark—was hard won. She observed because she had to.

Bishop's correspondence with Moore is a polite clash of one aesthetic creed with another: Moore's modernist convictions, impersonal and objective, versus Bishop's more private and exploratory approach. "Tentativeness and interiorizing are your dangers as well as your strength," Moore told Bishop in an early letter, and proceeded to "correct" the opening lines of Bishop's "Paris, 7 A.M.":

> I make a trip to each clock in the
> apartment:
> some hands point histrionically one way
> and some point others, from the ignorant
> faces.

"I tend to wish something less explicit than 'the apartment,' " Moore remarked, and bluntly suggested "something like this":

> I go from clock to clock,
> From room to room:
> Some hands point one way
> Some another, from the ignorant faces.

The only thing fully Bishop's to survive the surgery is the word "ignorant." Bishop patiently explained her wish to salvage "apartment": "To me that word suggests so strongly the structure of the houses . . . and suggests a 'cut-off' mode of existence so well—that I don't want to change it unless you feel it would mean a great improvement." No change was made.

Implicit in the organization of *Becoming a Poet* (as in that of Kalstone's previous book on modern poetry, *Five Temperaments*) is the notion that literary change occurs in polite transactions among personalities; our correspondence gives us away. Such a view is most promising when the poets treated conceive of themselves as a school, such as the Southern Fugitives or the postwar British poets who called themselves simply "The Movement." But Bishop held herself deliberately aloof from any grouping with other writers. She worked alone, and her poetic idiosyncrasies probably had more to do with questions of social class and sexual orientation than with some unchanging temperament, to be shared with fellow poets.

Kalstone's book is at odds with the more social and historical concerns of contemporary criticism, with their close attention to questions of class, gender, and ethnicity. Still, one is struck, in many passages quoted from Bishop's letters, by how explicitly her poems respond to contemporary events. Kalstone notes that the sestina "A Miracle for Breakfast" is a "mid-Depression poem," but doesn't pursue the way its theme of the sacramental feeding of thousands—

> At six o'clock we were waiting for coffee,
> and the charitable crumb
> that was going to be served from a certain
> balcony

—responded to the breadlines of the 1930s.

It was another poem tethered to contemporary events that strained relations between Bishop and Moore almost beyond civility. Bishop always referred to her much anthologized "Roosters" (1941) as her "war poem." It is in part a criticism of male posturing, the roosters terrorizing their "rustling wives" only to end up, all useless battles done, on the ash heap, "with open, bloody eyes / while those metallic feathers oxidize." Moore, feeling perhaps some proprietary right to bestiaries, came down hard on "Roosters," which she suggested renaming "The Cock." She completely rewrote the poem and sent the new version to Bishop, and their friendship was never the same. Moore strongly objected to the adjectives in the fifth stanza:

> Cries galore
> come from the water-closet door,
> from the dropping-plastered henhouse
> floor,

which "sordidities" Bishop defended "because I want to emphasize the essential baseness of militarism." The messiness of the opening scenery was, Bishop explained, the result of her thinking of "those aerial views of dismal little towns in Finland & Norway, when the

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Germans took over, and their atmosphere of poverty."

Such responsiveness to the specific events of one's time seems as foreign to Moore's more "timeless" aesthetic—with its collage-like appropriation of quotations ancient and modern—as it is to Kalstone's fundamentally ahistoric approach to literary change. In fairness one should add that, judging from her correspondence with Bishop, Moore was a braver poet than she was a teacher. Her dogmatic precepts, hardly followed to the letter in her flexible verse, seemed drawn from a memorized instructor's manual—Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading*, say. Surely she knew, at some level, that she wasn't improving Bishop's poems, and in at least one case, her rewritten version of "Paris, 7 A.M.," her changes would have made the poem unpublishable; but when asked for advice she gave it, as though by rote.

But having dropped Moore's prim leash, Bishop quickly assumed the schoolmarm's role in her ensuing correspondence with Robert Lowell. Randall Jarrell had introduced them in 1947, and the attraction was so immediate that Lowell considered proposing marriage. The two poets had much to offer each other. For Bishop, shy of academia and the predominantly male poetry business, Lowell became a willing middleman, securing grants and awards for her. For Lowell, always omnivorous of material and methods, Bishop's use of seemingly casual descriptive detail to advance a narrative suggested a way to disarm the arsenal of forms and rhetoric in his early poetry, and find a new and more informal rhetoric for his two most enduring and influential books, *Life Studies* and *For the Union Dead*.

Bishop was particularly drawn to the poems in *Life Studies* about Lowell's well-bred family, so different from her own:

> I am green with envy of your kind of assurance. I feel that I could write in as much detail about my Uncle Artie, say—but what would be the significance? Nothing at all. He became a drunkard, fought with his wife, and spent most of his time fishing . . . and was ignorant as sin. It is sad; slightly more interesting than having an uncle practising law in Schenectady maybe, but that's all. Whereas all you have to do is put down the names! And the fact that it seems significant, illustrative, American, etc. gives you, I think, the confidence you display about tackling any idea or theme, *seriously*, in both writing and conversation. In some ways you are the luckiest poet I know!—in some ways not so lucky, either, of course. But it is hell to realize one has wasted half one's talent through timidity that probably could have been overcome if anyone in one's family had had a few grains of sense or education . . .

But the wit and the envy concealed a certain unease, which Bishop increasingly expressed as Lowell made more intimate and wounding use of his family material. "In general, I deplore the 'confessional,'" Bishop wrote Lowell in 1972; and the loose sonnets he began writing during the late 1960s, with their explicit plundering of private correspondence with wives and lovers, seemed to Bishop to cross the line of propriety. She told Lowell that she thought the poems in *The Dolphin*, chronicling the end of one marriage and the start of another, were "great"—"I've never used the word 'great' before"—but she also advised Lowell not to publish them. "One can use one's life as material—one does, anyway—but these letters—aren't you violating a trust?" she wondered. "IF you were given permission—IF you hadn't changed them . . . etc. But *art just isn't worth that much*." Lowell's transgressions seemed to her symptoms of a generational malaise:

> I don't give a damn that someone like Mailer writes about his wives & marriages—I just hate the level we seem to live and think and feel on at present—but I DO give a damn about what you write! . . . I can't bear to have anything you write tell—perhaps—what we're really like in 1972 . . . perhaps it's as simple as that.

Again one has the impression of the clash of two aesthetics. Lowell's omnivorous approach to life and writing served as a model for 20 years of writers' workshops and autobiographical verse. ("I am so sick of poems about the students' mothers & fathers and sex-lives and so on," Bishop wrote Lowell, surely holding him partly responsible.) It is only in the past ten years or so that the confessional, under attack from both the "language" poets and the New Formalists, has seemed to be on the wane, while Bishop's more oblique approach to private revelation has seemed, to a whole generation of poets (some of whom studied with her at Harvard in the early 1970s), the more promising model..

Becoming a Poet offers some of the pleasures of a volume of letters, with helpful and unintrusive commentary. Kalstone is unfailingly shrewd in his readings and provides useful cross-references to poems and prose. It is as biography that I think the book is less than satisfying. (I voice these qualms with the knowledge that the author left his book incomplete and not entirely revised at his death.) Perhaps Kalstone is too tactful, and surprises are sprung on the reader as a result. We learn well into the book that

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Bishop had been "on the wagon for a long time," but this is the first mention of her drinking problem, which was apparently considerable. We hear a good deal about Bishop's early "friends" and "companions," but only late in the book—when the possibility of Lowell's proposal is broached—are we told that "Bishop's sexual preferences were for women." Kalstone is perhaps following Bishop's hesitancies in these matters, but biography is an intrusive genre. Surely Bishop's sexual orientation has some bearing on her writing; while the issue is complex, it can hardly be ignored.

Kalstone praises Bishop's "devotion to the concrete," but he is himself a devotee of abstraction. He repeatedly uses terms like "the self's barbaric energies" and "the savage sources of survival," without anchoring these feral phrases in some recognizable human situation. The job of criticism, for him (and he is hardly alone in this), is a matter of translating the particular imagery of poetry into romantic abstractions like loss, nature, and the self:

> How far *are* our problematic energies naturalized—at home in the world? How much does the world tell us, in brute kinship, about selfhood? To what extent does it tease us with glimpses of unattainable, ongoing harmony? These are the questions that trouble the surface of "Roosters" . . .

But it is precisely the surface of "Roosters," and of other poems, that is lost sight of in such loose philosophizing, unmoored from any real or imagined situation. Fortunately, the superb letters of these poets keep recalling Kalstone to the texture of their poems and prose. One reads on in order to arrive again, with relief, at his more telling engagements with the language of poetry, and these are coaxed from the clashes between temperaments.

CHRISTOPHER BENFEY teaches at Mount Holyoke College and is at work on a study of Stephen Crane.

Drab Bull

BY HENRY FAIRLIE

A Natural Curiosity by Margaret Drabble

(Viking, 309 pp., $19.95)

It is discouraging to open a novel and find it prefaced by an author's note that reads:

> I had not intended to write a sequel [to *The Radiant Way*], but felt that the earlier novel was in some way unfinished, that it had asked questions it had not answered, and introduced people who had hardly been allowed to speak.

Only a few scattered critics in Britain and America suggested that in *The Radiant Way*, which appeared in 1987, Margaret Drabble had slipped badly. But she now has her doubts about it, and perhaps also about this sequel, since she adds that she intends to write a third novel, picking up the story of a minor character who has disappeared to Democratic Kampuchea, where we are to follow him. One has been offered, in one's time, more enticing prospects.

In *A Natural Curiosity* we are escorted back to Drabble's England of the 1980s, again with her three protagonists, the middle-aged friends Liz and Esther and Alix. They were all born in Northam, an imaginary industrial city in Yorkshire, reminiscent of the Sheffield in which Drabble was raised. They went to Cambridge, as Drabble did. Then, still in Drabble's footsteps, they moved to London. They have now, like Drabble, reached their 50s, three professional (emphatically not business) women: Liz is a therapist, Esther is an art historian, and Alix (who has moved back to Northam) has a contrived job that is less important than her obsession with a mass murderer in a nearby prison. In other words, none of them (like a novelist?) really works for an employer, or even with a partner. This gives them at least a sensation of independence.

What are we to make of an experienced novelist who thinks that her autobiography, followed so closely, can breathe life into *three* characters? Their dissimilarities, perfunctory and mechanical, worn like labels, are not enough to differentiate them clearly, even though (with Esther packed off to Italy) they are now apart. Nor do the distinctions create any tension in their 30-year friendship that might call for an interesting accommodation. In their exchanges—at the end they are brought together again—their voices are interchangeable.

By now we have followed them through 719 pages, from New Year's Eve 1979 to late May 1987, and still we cannot be sure why we were introduced to them in the first place, or what we have learned about or from them. They, like their readers, have also had to struggle with the hobbling repetitiveness of Drabble's writing, the wearying lack of movement in the two novels, and contrivances in the plot that exhaust even a willing suspension of disbelief.

There are reminders of how Drabble used to carry us with her: the lucidity of observation, her exploration of character, and generally the style of her earlier fiction. When *A Natural Curiosity* opens, Alix is driving across the Yorkshire moors, on a mission to Porston Prison, "as the white mist parted for her. She had the illusion of moving in a small patch of light, her own small pocket of clarity. She took it with her, it moved with her." To start us off, we could hardly ask for better. We are informed and we are intrigued. Once Drabble would have left it there. Now she piles on five sentences about "The sleeping place of the sun. . . . As the Ancients put it," that obliterate the pocket of clarity. Clumps of snowdrops clustered round the swollen bole of a tree: "Their little white heads assemble." If you have the gift to find a verb of such exact, livening observation, why add, "A promise of spring," fit for a Hallmark card? The snowdrops are not wanton. They reappear later, now on Alix's desk:

> They jostle in their wineglass on their thin stems. She lifts the face of one of them, gazes inquiringly into its intricate green and yellow and white, and lets it fall back. With a sigh, the whole wineglass rearranges itself, with inimitable, once-only grace, to create a new pattern. The flowers shiver and quake into stillness. They cannot fall wrongly. They cannot make themselves into a false shape.

Moment, mood, character, even time of year, in a wineglass.

But read the passage again, deleting "With a sigh" (trite, off-putting); "inimitable" (ditto); "to create a new pattern" (the snowdrops have rearranged themselves); and the final "They cannot make a false shape" (the preceding sentence found just the note on which to end). Each falsifies precisely the point that the snowdrops were making: January, a new beginning, her middle-aged characters possibly rearranging their lives, but all too likely to fall wrongly. Now Drabble squashes the snowdrops.

Why do these two assertive and ambi-

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tious novels, uncomfortably joined like Siamese twins, make themselves into a false shape? She places many hurdles in her way, but the main obstacle lies in the nature of the ambition. In all the forced artifice of plot, character, image, and, alas, the actual writing, one feels the author gritting her teeth to deliver the Great English Novel of the 1980s. The politics; the class divisions, the unemployed, the homeless; the North, the South; the inner cities, the suburbs; the greed, the crime; the shimmer of the affluent, the drudgery of the neglected; the culture, the generation gap (still?); the crumbling of standards, the attrition of loyalties; the bankruptcy, the futility; and behind it all, the surrender of empire.

It is Thatcher's England—with, to drive the point home, a few limp references to "the fleshpots of Reaganland." Got it? For Drabble is not going to move on until she is sure we have got it. All this and more ("the extraordinary mixture of whining vote-beseeching, arse-licking vulgarity, demotic stupidity, intellectual pretension, moral confusion, and entertainment-packaged pseudo-seriousness") is to be shown through the three protagonists, along with the minor characters now brought forward to have their say, and a clutter of new ones—a nuisance to the novel, every one of them.

Almost mute in *The Radiant Way*, Liz Headleand's sister, Shirley Harper, is now made present, reflecting on the "dull despair" of her marriage:

> The house ticks over, Shirley ticks over, Shirley-and-Cliff tick over. . . . It all seems a little unreal, but then, the country at large seems a little unreal too. It is hard to tell if it is ticking over or not. Are we bankrupt or are we prosperous?

There follows still another of Drabble's catalogs of England's woes. Or are these signs of prosperity? Got it? Are the emotional lives of the characters bankrupt or prosperous? Got it. This finger-wagging gets in the way of the characters, and between them and the reader. They are denied all volition, and we are denied our own to find them, and what they represent, for ourselves.

The marriages and ineffectual liaisons of Liz, Alix, Esther, and the rest are all, even those that are beginning, in various stages of disillusion, lifelessness, or final disintegration. Even Alix's steady (second) marriage to Brian, an "unreconstructed socialist," survives largely because she is so enthralled by herself that it is of little consequence to her that she finds Brian a stick in the mud. Her marriage is another of her good causes, calling for a patient social worker. Beyond themselves, they like or care about few others. Their relationships with their children are mostly listless, cold, or actively hostile. It is even hard to be confident that they are deeply fond of or interested in each other.

So what impels them, which might make us care, as they re-examine their lives in middle age? We are directed to the title:

> Attractive danger. Natural curiosity. Unnatural curiosity. Charles Headleand cannot resist pursuing a visa for Baldai. Alix Bowen cannot resist traveling to see her murderer across the lonely moor . . . and Liz Headleand will not be able to resist an invitation to appear in a contentious debate on television.

Toward the end we find Liz:

> Her curiosity is at a low ebb. It occurs to her that not only may she die before she satisfies it, but that she may also lose it before she dies. Curiosity has kept her alive. What if she were to lose it now? She has not the energy to move. . . . She yawns. . . . She nods, her eyes close, she dozes.

(We're with her there.) Curiosity is a thin motive to explain three protagonists, or to sustain our interest in them. If they cannot resist what they choose to do, if they have been made by their creator so will-less, who cares?

The England they represent is so unremittingly dismal, hopeless, and hapless that it carries no conviction, even for a reader who laments much of what Thatcher is, stands for, and has done. Marriage and family are here the analogues of the discordance of English society in the 1980s. In *The Radiant Way* we were introduced to the family as the "source of murder, battering, violence." Now we discover that Liz and Shirley's father committed suicide, and Shirley's daughter Celia is at Oxford, ignoring pleas from her family to get in touch because her father is ill. "The cold dull breath of home cannot touch her here." As in the first novel, sex fares no better (except in one faintly warm encounter, when Shirley vanishes after not reporting that her husband has—of course—committed suicide, meets a stranger on the cross-Channel ferry, and conducts a brief romance with him in Paris). Liz lunches with a friend who tells her he is getting married:

> She wishes Ivan and Alicia well, yes, of course she does, but how can she, at her age, have any faith in their vision of married bliss . . .? Unless they are freaks, who have escaped the human condition altogether, one can be certain that grief, boredom, infidelity or disillusion await Mr and Mrs Ivan Warner . . .

In this bleakness, the characters are carrying the burden not only of England through the 1980s, but of England through 2,000 years. In *The Radiant Way* we were introduced to Cartimandua, the Queen of the Brigantes, who betrayed her people to the Romans, and we are reintroduced to her on page ten of the sequel, along with Druids, Stonehenge, the Bog Man of Buller and, inexplicably, "*Onychomys leucogaster*, the stubborn stocky mouse of Utah (see study by L. D. Clark)," which pops up later, for no discernible reason. Cartimandua, the Brigantes, the Celts, and the rest, infest the new novel, all to suggest that the

> treacherous Celtic Queen, gold-torqued, magnificent, betraying her people for the civilization and comforts of the Romans . . . [could be made] topical, surely—a hint in the portrayal of Cartimandua of the Prime Minister, duplicitous Britannia, striking deals with a powerful American, abandoning the ancient culture of her own folk? Those stiff hair styles would surely lend themselves well to allusion, to analogue.

Mrs. Cartimandua Thatcher. Got it? In case we are slow, Alix is forced by her creator to take down her "battered old purple Penguin Tacitus" to find that the ancient Britons were led on to their enslavement by the comforts of Roman life: "Coca-Cola, McDonald's, blue jeans, jacuzzis . . . yes, that was surely what Tacitus had in mind." Surely.

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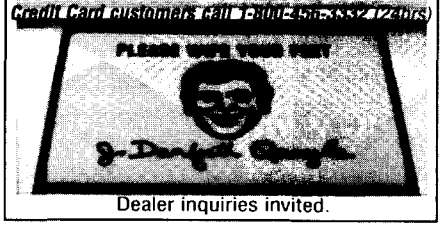
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Drabble won't let go of her portentous analogy. From the ancient Britons ("Hadn't they burned people alive in wicker cages?") she ransacks history and mythology for the symbolism of violence on which she relies to give a jolt to an otherwise stationary plot. *The Radiant Way* ended with the identification and the arrest of the Horror of Harrow Road, of whom we had been hearing, off and on, for his ungentlemanly habit of cutting off women's heads. He was discovered to be Esther's upstairs neighbor (an unassuming man, except when severing heads), who was taken away by the police while she and Liz and Alix chattered downstairs. This contrivance was rendered more implausible by the fact that the Horror's final victim was a former prison inmate, Jilly Fox, whom Alix had befriended in her social work, whose head he deposited in Alix's car.

It is to visit the imprisoned murderer P. Whitmore that we find Alix driving in her "small pocket of clarity," cheerfully singing, "O come, O come, Ema-a-anuel, Redeem thy captive I-i-israel." She is bearing as a Christmas present "a new, illustrated book about Roman Britain and the resistance of the Brigantes," because "P. Whitmore was very interested in the ancient Britons, and knew quite a lot about prehistory." Credulity is out the window, again. Eventually Drabble concedes that "Alix Bowen has got Roman Britain and severed heads on the brain."

Severed heads of all kinds are strewn through the novel: from archaeology, Medusa's, in the Italian paintings Esther studies, even that of a bull mastiff owned by Whitmore's mother, whom Alix tracks down in a scene of ghoulish improbability. Violence becomes the only symbolism, of England and of people's lives, that Drabble seems able to reach. "Life is more like an old-fashioned, melodramatic novel than we care to know," we are told. Drabble has written one, without the zest and even conviction of the authentic ones.

If Drabble wished to portray Thatcher's England with the banality of evil, it would have to be done with a good deal more subtlety, indirectness, and variousness than she here seems able to summon. Equally, if we are to be persuaded, as she sometimes seems to intend, that only the mad are sane in the high-tech England, "clean and sparkling," that the solicitor Clive Enderby imagines for Northam, we can, at this late date, only yawn.

Still, the reader feels that such questions as the novel has asked have not been answered. Drabble herself appears to think so, because at the end, in a section marked off with its date at the top, Liz and Alix and Esther are brought together in Italy to explain it all to us. Liz is in the process of taking back Charles, after he has drifted unsuccessfully from woman to woman. (Few of Drabble's men are successful, in their businesses or the rest of their lives: poor husbands, poor fathers, poor lovers.) Esther has ended her lesbian relationship in Italy. Alix still bears, effortlessly, with Brian. Of her obsession with her murderer, Alix says: "So, I haven't proved anything. I've just confirmed my own prejudices about human nature. I've been traveling round in a closed circuit," like the novel. "Me and my murderer together." A natural curiosity? We've been put through it all to find that?

But Esther suddenly announces: "I'm coming back to London. I'm going to buy a flat. In London. That's the plan." (We have no idea of what she learned in Italy, or learned from her lesbianism, or of why her creator wanted to impose either on her):

> Liz and Alix express their satisfaction at this decision. . . . "England's not a bad country," says Liz. . . . "No," says Alix. "No" . . . "England's not a bad country. It's just a mean, cold, ugly, divided, tired, clapped-out post-imperial, post-industrial slag-heap covered in polystyrene hamburger cartons. It's not a bad country at all. I love it."
>
> And they laugh—what else can they do?

The reader has more options. •

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 8*

mother and child) and the individual's interest in being free of excessive governmental intrusion. Suppose a state legislature passed a law *compelling* abortion. Would TNR consider that also beyond the reach of the Supreme Court? One reason we have the Court is to delimit the power of state legislatures.

Critics of *Roe* are always quick to point out that the word "privacy" never appears in the Constitution. That's true, but if Judge Bork and like-minded legal scholars, including those now sitting on the Court, persist in their reductio ad absurdum logic as to how broadly they're permitted to interpret the Constitution, they, in the words of Justice O'Connor, are on a collision course with themselves. The Court's power to enforce its rulings is derived from the doctrine of "judicial review": two words that never appear in the Constitution.

HOWARD D. LAVINE
Baltimore, Maryland

TRB *continued from page 6*

talk of "penumbras" and "emanations" from the Bill of Rights that festoons the assertion of a constitutional right of privacy. But few can resist just a bit of emanating themselves. Three years ago the Rehnquist Court declared that there is no constitutional right to commit homosexual sodomy but there just might be a constitutional right to commit heterosexual sodomy. Go figure. Bork, in his book, comes up with an implausible defense of an early "substantive due process" case holding that there is a constitutional right to send your child to a private school. There is a right conservatives can wrap their heads around.

In *Cruzan*, the Justice Department concedes that even the narrowest definition of constitutional liberty should "include the interest of a competent adult in refusing unwanted medical treatment." Missouri emphasizes that it is not denying this right, merely setting a very high standard (compelling proof of previously expressed intention) for its exercise on behalf of an incompetent. But the Justice Department goes on to say, "There obviously can be no serious claim that a competent adult has a due process right to starve himself to death."

Is that so obvious? Surely the leap from the words "life, liberty, or property" to a right to end your own life is smaller than the leap Bork makes effortlessly from those same words to the entire Bill of Rights. It seems absurd to say that there is a profound constitutional right to kill yourself by refusing necessary medical treatment but not to do so by refusing food or by more expeditious measures. The more limited medical right that all parties agree is in the Constitution derives from the basic meaning of "liberty" as freedom from physical restraint by the state. Does the state really have an unlimited right to imprison a citizen in an unwanted life?

What *is* obvious is that the state has a legitimate interest in assuring that this right is being exercised deliberately and thoughtfully. That is rare, but not impossible. It is fine for the police to stop people from attempting suicide by jumping off bridges. It is sensible (and surely constitutional) to require counseling of potential suicides, and to have strict (but not absolute) laws against assisting suicide. The right to die can legitimately be made extremely hard to exercise. But as a practical matter, it can't be made impossible. And as a constitutional matter, it shouldn't be.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Browbeaten

IF GOD EXISTS, WHY IS THERE kitsch? The question struck me with the force of the rain that was punching my umbrella. I was outside the Metropolitan Opera, running for my sensibility, a few moments after a dinner-jacketed gentleman in row L had collapsed in the aisle as the mean Germont sang "piangi, piangi" to the lost Violetta. I had come to hear Carlos Kleiber's and see Franco Zeffirelli's *La Traviata*; but Kleiber bagged it, and Zeffirelli's Paris of the Second Empire looked like it was built by Trump. On my flight to New York, moreover, I had read Tom Wolfe's "literary manifesto for the new social novel" in *Harper's* and, because we lingered interminably in the indifferent clouds, had opened Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*. And so I was testy, as I tramped through the little lakes of Broadway, and worried over the problem of cultural theodicy, or why the vulgar prosper. The worst was still to come.

FROM TOM WOLFE, I LEARNED that Faulkner was a realist and that Kafka was a bad writer whose influence has been deplorable. ("As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into . . . *a gigantic insect!!!!*" There, that's better.) I learned that the fate of American fiction has been sealed by Ronald Sukenick and that Joseph Wambaugh has been "overshadowed in literary terms." And I learned that the hero of 20th-century American letters, the writer most nourishing to writers, is Sinclair Lewis. Of "Balzac, Zola, and Lewis." It's a relief, certainly, from James Gould Cozzens, who was the idol of the conservative critics circa the first Reagan administration. Wolfe is demanding "realism," by which he means writing as he writes: the gaudy relishing of animosities, the lording of mockery over misery, the substitution of anthropology for the methods of art. Like many conservatives, Wolfe will not quit the '60s; they were good to him. He hates despair, and form, and small towns, and the other. "Status modified by personality" is his idea of the great American subject. American intellectual life is threatened by the tyranny of society, and Tom Wolfe proposes the worship of society. Television and newspapers and magazines are transforming every recess of American experience into journalism, and Tom Wolfe's advice to the writer is, report. The vanities of *The Bonfire*, I guess.

THE AIRPORT STILL WOULDN'T receive me. I turned to Eco and a whiskey. His "thriller" is poorly written and swiftly read, and it wasn't long before I seemed to hold in my hands the most cynical manipulation of knowledge I have ever encountered. Well, not quite knowledge; *Foucault's Pendulum* is, rather, a monument to knowingness. It was not written, it was compiled. From page 203, typically:

> The Great White Fraternity was ultimately responsible for the education of: Hermes Trimegistus (who influenced the Italian Renaissance just as much as he later influenced Princeton gnosis), Homer, the Druids of Gaul, Solomon, Solon, Pythagoras, Plotinus, the Essenes, the Theraputae, Joseph of Arimethea (who took the Grail to Europe), Alcuin, King Dagobert, Saint Thomas, Bacon, Shakespeare, Spinoza, Jakob Bohme, Debussy, Einstein. (Amparo whispered that he seemed to be missing only Nero, Cambronne, Geronimo, Pancho Villa, and Buster Keaton.)

The list is one of Eco's favorite devices. It is designed to reduce all things to the condition of information. And the reference to popular culture is the great heartener, the last bulwark against gravity. Eco's fiction is the perfect fruit of Eco's semiotics, of its sporting way with the serious. Maybe the traduction of the kabbalah is what wounded me; but the Hebrew epigraph from Isaac Luria (in the Italian edition, I'm told, it is listed more accurately as an illustration) is a passage of extraordinary difficulty, and of enormous consequence for Jewish spirituality. It is not a game. "There is no longer any difference between developing the habit of pretending to believe," Eco writes, "and developing the habit of believing." How nice for Eco, that decay. He grows fat from it.

BUT THE WORST, AS I SAY, WAS still to come. From the opera I repaired to the movies, to Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, or The Lyin' of Judah. I was overwhelmed by what I saw. Let me be blunt: it is a matter of honor to hate this film. There is not a frame of it that fails to degrade, to debase, and to demean something precious. It is the work of a consumer, a tourist, a peacock, a counterfeiter, a voyeur, a coward, a philistine, a creep. It is a stain on the culture that produced it. I didn't like it.

IT IS, FOR A START, A WORK OF unrelieved banality, in its language and in its themes. It makes you wonder if paperbacks were a good idea, after all. Allen's people awaken "as if from a dream," they face "a black void," they seek "what's real and deep and lasting." A blind rabbi dances, I swear, to "I'll Be Seeing You." More generally, Allen has an undergraduate's notion of narrative: a half-dozen softly spoken, highly socialized characters in a couple of plots and you're Chekhov. In fact, he has produced a soap opera, a kind of *General Synagogue*. Judah the ophthalmologist is cheating on Miriam with Dolores and comes for counsel to Ben the rabbi, whose brother Lester is a television producer whose brother-in-law Cliff is a documentary filmmaker who is hoping that Halley will desire him because he has discovered . . . We'll get to Cliff's discovery in a moment.

ALLEN IS CLIFF, AND HE HAS NEVer treated himself with more solemnity. His integrity is boundless. It is, not least, the integrity of a man who fails with women. In this world, you pay for your pleasure. More, pleasure is murder. Judah has his lover killed. He might have confessed to his wife and asked for forgiveness, but courage would have been required. Anyway women do not forgive, which is just as well, since men after Auschwitz would be at a loss for evil. Allen has never made his horror of vitality so plain. The most attractive character in the film is its least attractive character, the television producer. He is cheerful, he bursts with will, he puts his hands on women. He is alive, and therefore he is vulgar. And not only vulgar; Allen compares him, please believe me, to Mussolini. (This is a film in which the voluptuary is Alan Alda and the saint is Sam Waterston.)

AS USUAL, ALLEN DISHONORS HIS Jewishness. Jewish is smart, smart is ugly, Jewish is ugly. He gives a shul and a seder and a wedding peopled with Jewish grotesques. The fathers are weak and devout, the mothers are mighty and worldly, the sons are pale and doomed. But more than his Jewishness, Allen dishonors a particular Jew. The discovery that is supposed to deliver Halley to Cliff is Louis Levy, a Jewish philosopher, "no limos, no bimbos, no awards, just a thinker, an intellect," about whom Cliff is making a documentary. Levy is "played" by my old friend Martin Bergmann, a wise and learned psychoanalyst in Manhattan with a powerful inclination to philosophy, whom Allen taped in what seems to be spontaneous ratiocination. In the film Louis Levy reflects, and jumps out a window. My friend, in other words, played Primo Levi; and it was Primo Levi's role to help Woody Allen get into a woman's pants. But television is tawdry.

AND THESE PEOPLE WONDER WHY God won't talk to them.

LEON WIESELTIER

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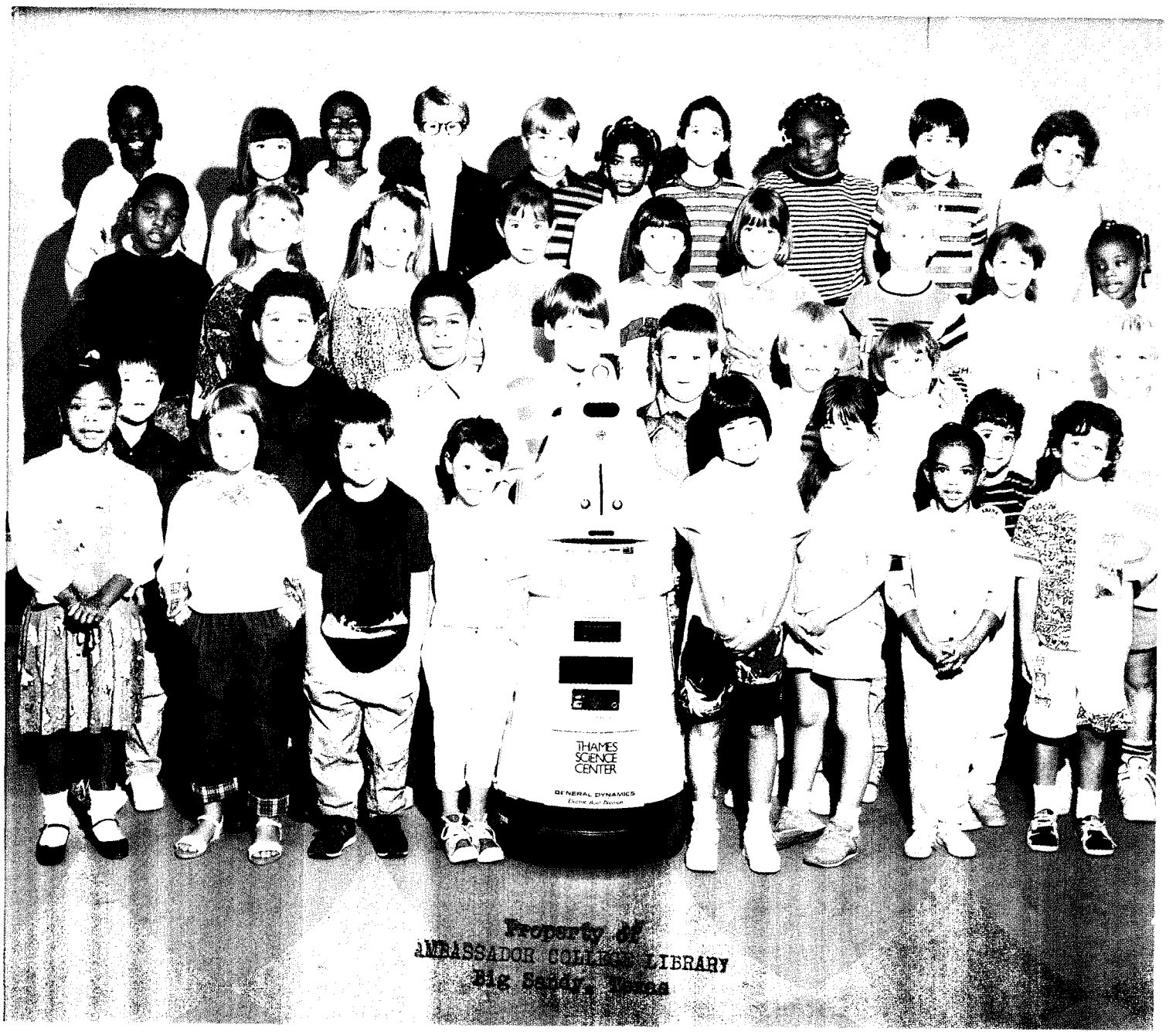

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